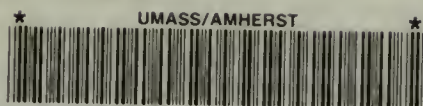


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NO TIME TO LOSE

A Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Youth Violence

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Attorney General Scott Harshbarger
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Jay A. Winsten, Ph.D.
Associate Dean and Center Director
Center for Health Communication
Harvard School of Public Health



Cover: Attorney General Scott Harshbarger and students who participated in the fifth session of the series of Working Luncheons on Youth Violence Prevention on May 1, 1997, at the Harvard School of Public Health.

NO TIME TO LOSE

A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE

This report was authored by:

Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Jay A. Winsten, Ph.D., Associate Dean and Center Director
Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health

Carolyn Keshian, Assistant Attorney General
Family and Community Crimes Bureau, Office of the Attorney General

Terri Grodner Mendoza, Director of Health Information
Harvard Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health

November 1997

No Time To Lose

*This report is dedicated in memory of our late colleague and friend,
Paul R. McLaughlin, Assistant Attorney General.*

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In preparation of this report, the authors drew on recommendations offered by participants at the working luncheons. This report reflects the opinions of the authors. It does not necessarily reflect the views of all of the individuals who participated in the luncheon series.

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NO TIME TO LOSE

A COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of a series of Working Luncheons on Youth Violence Prevention co-sponsored by Attorney General Scott Harshbarger and the Harvard School of Public Health's Center for Health Communication, directed by Jay A. Winsten, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Public and Community Affairs. The series is an outgrowth of the Center's national "Squash It!" Campaign to Prevent Youth Violence, described later in this report.

Six Working Luncheons were held from October 1995 to May 1997, and were conducted in cooperation with Harvard's Violence Prevention Program, directed by Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., Professor and Associate Dean of Public Health Practice at the Harvard School of Public Health. The series was supported by a grant from the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation, and brought together senior officials from government and law enforcement; experts from academe; leaders from the business and philanthropic communities; representatives of community and religious groups; professionals from public schools; members of the news media; and local teens.

This series on youth violence prevention marks the third time that Attorney General Harshbarger and the Harvard Center for Health Communication have collaborated on a luncheon series to focus attention on important issues. The first joint effort, a series of working luncheons on drinking and driving conducted from 1985 to 1988, was credited with helping to pass legislation increasing penalties for operating under the influence. A series of luncheons on domestic violence prevention was held from 1991 to 1993. A final report of that series contained recommendations that were adopted by the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence; many of these recommendations have since been implemented.

The third series, summarized in this report, had its origins in a Harvard-MetLife Leadership Forum on Youth Violence Prevention held on June 13, 1995, at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. This event, funded by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health's "Squash It!" Campaign to Prevent Youth Violence, addressed how both guns and despair are severely undermining efforts to help today's youth. The session featured presentations by Attorney General Harshbarger, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, and Martin Kaplan, then Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Education. The Forum brought together over 100 local leaders and spawned a discussion of what could be accomplished locally, thereby launching the series of Working Luncheons on Youth Violence Prevention.

Five of the six sessions in the series examined a range of issues related to youth violence prevention, including comprehensive interdisciplinary approaches to law enforcement; the interruption of illicit gun markets; community support for prevention programs; the importance of prenatal care, parenting education, and early childhood experiences; and the crucial role adults play in young people's lives. These sessions are summarized in Section Six of the report. The final session was devoted to a discussion of recommendations for preventing youth violence in Massachusetts. The series featured distinguished speakers, including local teenagers and experts from government agencies, law enforcement, the judicial system, academe, communities, and health care.

The key recommendations contained in this report reflect a comprehensive response to youth violence that balances prevention with prosecution and punishment. They are organized according to the following five categories: (1) Crime Fighting Strategies That Work; (2) Identifying, Building, and Mobilizing Community Resources to Prevent Youth Violence; (3) Early Prevention: Building the Basics; (4) Early Intervention: Building Safe Schools, Safe Spaces, and Safe Futures; and (5) Coordination of State Systems.

We recommend that the following actions be taken in the Commonwealth:

1. Establish juvenile prosecution units and Community-Based Juvenile Justice projects statewide to identify and target serious and violent juvenile offenders for priority prosecution.
2. Take aggressive steps to reduce youth access to and possession of firearms.
3. Sustain, amplify, and replicate promising law enforcement initiatives that have helped to reduce youth violence statewide.
4. Establish violence prevention councils in every community to guide violence prevention efforts.
5. Conduct a "community assessment" to identify and coordinate local resources.
6. Focus community assessment on early childhood resources within the community to strengthen violence prevention efforts.
7. Involve local youth in community planning and the development of strategies to prevent youth violence.
8. Create a network of community-based services to promote early intervention with at-risk children as soon as they are identified.
9. Enact newborn home visiting legislation to cover all first-time mothers under the age of 21.

10. Establish a comprehensive continuum of early childhood care and education for children from birth to age 6.
11. Establish mechanisms to identify and immediately respond to children who witness violence.
12. Make standard in all public schools from kindergarten through grade twelve effective peer mediation programs, substance abuse prevention programs, teen dating violence prevention projects, and violence prevention curricula, to improve the safety of school-aged youth.
13. Develop swift and effective responses to truancy and dropping out of school.
14. Provide alternative education for students excluded from school.
15. Ensure that all children have a caring adult or mentor in their lives.
16. Develop high-quality and safe programming and activities for children and youth during the hours that they are not in school.
17. Develop collaborative efforts to provide jobs for youth and expand school-to-work partnerships to prepare all interested students for the world of work.
18. Take immediate action to achieve the statewide expansion of a full-time juvenile court system.
19. Ensure the imposition of immediate sanctions for all juvenile offenders, including first-time, nonviolent offenders.
20. Develop a strong system of intermediate sanctions, including intensive probation supervision for high-risk juvenile offenders.
21. Develop innovative approaches to strengthen accountability for juvenile offenders.
22. Restructure the state human service agencies to create a comprehensive service delivery system for children and families.
23. Continue to enhance intensive aftercare services for all youth committed to the Department of Youth Services (DYS) transitioning out of secure residential placements.

24. Expand the range and number of services available to female offenders committed to DYS.
25. Establish an Office of Data Collection, Evaluation, and Training.

Reducing youth violence through advanced law enforcement strategies, supportive state policies and systems, and community-based collaborations will not happen overnight. It involves building capacity in communities, and leveraging long-term commitments from key stakeholders in the public and private sectors. These recommendations are not “quick fixes,” but are building blocks to help sustain the progress we have made, and carry our success into the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION

If the world is a dangerous place, shooting first . . . makes sense. So, some of the violence we deal with is a rational response to life in irrational life circumstances, and we're not going to solve that fundamental problem by coming up with a neat little intervention program.

Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., February 12, 1997

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No Time To Lose embraces our commitment to address youth violence through a law enforcement and public health alliance. Although youth violence has typically been considered a "law enforcement problem," police and prosecutors primarily deal with the problem of violence at the end of the line—after a child has been the victim or perpetrator of violence. We recognize that to reduce violence in our neighborhoods, schools, and homes, we must also focus on *preventing* violence before it erupts, which requires both a criminal justice and a public health response.

As Dr. Prothrow-Stith has emphasized, "The public health model offers a variety of strategies that complement and strengthen the traditional criminal justice approach."¹ The public health approach involves identifying the factors associated with a condition, in this case violence, and then reducing or eliminating them. In practice, it means designing initiatives to address the problems that we know contribute to crime and violence later in life. In the case of youth violence, the root causes are complex, deep-rooted, and often intertwined. They include depressed economic conditions, family violence, oppression, racism, and all forms of discrimination.² Youth violence occurs in

every community, and is perpetrated by young people from all racial and socio-economic backgrounds. However, many of the root causes of youth violence tend to be more concentrated in impoverished and underserved areas. There are no easy answers to these major societal issues, and we recognize that the recommendations in this report merely represent a starting point. The report focuses on the most direct and necessary actions Massachusetts should take, derived from our Working Luncheons, and offers a framework for advancing coordinated, comprehensive, and early action.

A Need For Action

While youth violence prevention is a complex issue, we now know that the most promising and cost-effective prevention begins at ground zero, quite literally, during the prenatal and infancy periods. Although youth violence and some of the images it evokes—gangs and guns—may seem removed from newborns and infants, the research is straightforward: the early years of life cast the mold that significantly shapes a child's future, including a child's future for violence.

As a result, the litmus test for whether we are committed to preventing youth violence should be how well we are doing for our children. The truth is, we can do better. The status of children in Massachusetts has declined over the past decade, in comparison to other states in the nation. In the 1990 edition of the *Kids Count Data Book*, Massachusetts ranked fifth among the 50 states for the well-being of children.³ By the 1996 report, Massachusetts' rank plummeted to number 13.⁴ In the most recent report, our rank rose modestly to number 8—still below our national ranking at the beginning of this decade.⁵ As these data point out, even Massachusetts, a state with vast resources and world-class institutions, cannot take the well-being of children for granted. We must be ever vigilant and proactive when it comes to the health and welfare of children.

Youth crime data also inject a sense of urgency about why we must focus on youth violence prevention. It is well known that juvenile crime rates are down. In 1995, the national arrest rate for juvenile homicide declined 15.2%—the largest annual decrease in more than ten years.⁶ In Boston, the decline has been even more dramatic, with an 80% drop in juvenile homicides between 1990 and 1995.⁷ Remarkably, not one juvenile has been killed by a gun or a knife in Boston since July 1995.⁸ However, several criminologists have predicted a “juvenile crime wave” in the future. They see the escalating juvenile crime rates of the 1980s and early 1990s and the projected increase in the “high-risk” youth population, expected to peak around the year 2010, as precursors to an unprecedented era of youth violence.⁹ The current decline in violent juvenile crime, therefore, provides us with a rare opportunity to focus on prevention. The predictions of a crime surge in the future underscore the importance of seizing this opportunity.

Obviously, there are cost and resource factors that must be addressed in deciding the priority, timing, breadth, and depth of the implementation of these recommendations. It all cannot be done at once. It should be recognized, however, that in the case of many of the recommendations, existing community resources—people, services, private businesses, and public institutions—can be drawn upon and redeployed. If we are willing to make an investment in the future, the fact is that prevention efforts are cost effective.

Prevention Saves

- \$ For every dollar spent on high quality preschool and child care for high-risk youth, seven dollars are saved in later criminal justice spending, welfare costs, and remedial educational services.¹⁰
- \$ Graduated incentives, parenting programs, and delinquency supervision, dollar for dollar are between two and four times as effective as the “three strikes” laws in preventing crime.¹¹
- \$ Hawaii’s Newborn Home Visiting Program resulted in 42 fewer cases of child abuse and neglect between 1987 and 1991, saving the state an estimated \$1.26 million in child protective services.¹²
- \$ It costs approximately \$191,000 to treat one gunshot survivor.¹³ This amount of money would virtually pay for operating the prevention-focused Weapons Related Injury Surveillance System for an entire year.¹⁴

SECTION ONE

Crime Fighting Strategies That Work

Findings

- A small percentage of youth, between 7-10%, are responsible for most violent crime in the United States.¹⁵
- In Boston, the youth homicide problem is concentrated among some 1,300 youth who account for less than 1% of the total youth population ages 14 to 24.¹⁶
- Gunshot wounds are the leading cause of death nationwide, after traffic accidents, for all youth between 15 and 19 years of age, surpassing all natural causes of death.¹⁷
- Homicides involving firearms continue to be the leading cause of death for African-American males between the ages of 15 and 19 in this country.¹⁸
- Since 1990, the percentage of juveniles committed to the Department of Youth Service (DYS) for the first time whose most serious offenses were crimes against the person has increased by 31%: from 34.5% of the newly committed juveniles in 1990, to 45.2% in 1996.¹⁹
- The juvenile homicide rate in Boston dropped 80% between 1990 and 1995.
- Not one juvenile has been killed by a gun or a knife in Boston since July 1995.²⁰

In communities ravaged by violent crime, an intense and coordinated criminal justice response is necessary. Many communities across the Commonwealth have already undertaken vigorous efforts to reduce crime and violence. Law enforcement agencies from all levels of government are working together and, most importantly, working in partnership with local groups. Communities are pulling together to restore safety and rebuild neighborhoods. The City of Boston's community-oriented, collaborative, and targeted enforcement programs have dramatically reduced crime in general—and juvenile gun violence in particular—and become a model for the nation.

Goals

- Suppress gang violence and violence by other high-risk youthful offenders through targeted and intensive crime fighting tactics.
- Disrupt the juvenile gun market and reduce juvenile gun violence.
- Promote swift and sure prosecution and sanctions for violent juvenile offenders.
- Empower members of the community to become involved in crime reduction approaches.

We have highlighted a few examples of effective programs below.



The Safe Neighborhood Initiative

“You’ve probably read the stories about what happened at Bowdoin Street. That’s an area in Dorchester that is part of our Safe Neighborhood Initiative. There are a number of cases where we’ve worked together, when there was a flare-up of gang violence, to bring all of the law enforcement agencies and community groups together, and to reach out to those kids and say we’re all working together to make sure that the violence stops.”

Robert Gittens, October 16, 1996

The Safe Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) is a collaborative effort by the Attorney General’s Office, the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office, the Boston Police Department, the Mayor’s Office, and local residents, to address a variety of problems in urban neighborhoods. The SNI has three specific goals:

1. Maximize the impact of existing neighborhood resources through effective communication and planning;
2. Focus efforts on the core principles of prevention and treatment, coordinated law enforcement—including community policing and prosecution—and neighborhood revitalization; and
3. Increase interagency collaborations through improved communication and regular contact between neighborhood residents and top government officials.

The SNI is driven by local “advisory councils” consisting of neighborhood residents, business owners, human service providers, and representatives from government agencies. The advisory councils serve as a vehicle for information sharing, investing people in the formulation of solutions, and setting an agenda for coordinated action. A coordinated response from the public and private sectors contributes to the success the SNI has had in improving the quality of life for the residents of the target area. The success of the SNI has prompted the Attorney General to dedicate funding for a statewide expansion effort.



Operation Cease Fire is a partnership between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office, the Boston Police Department, and U.S. Attorney’s Office. It is a “zero tolerance” strategy aimed directly at gang members in targeted areas of the city. Officials meet with identified gang members to define the terms of the zero tolerance policy for violence, and list the consequences for violation of those terms.



The Boston Gun Project is a collaborative effort with ATF, the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office, the Boston Police Department, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the Massachusetts Departments of Probation, Parole, and Youth Services, and researchers at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to study the

juvenile gun market in Boston. The project has gathered a great deal of useful intelligence regarding the illicit gun market, primarily by using ATF gun tracing, and interviewing firearms offenders. The goal of this project is to define the supply and demand driving the gun trade, and design law enforcement strategies based upon the information they obtain.



Youth Violence Strike Force is a multi-agency task force created by the Boston Police Department, as a part of the Department's comprehensive "Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement" strategy to attack youth violence. The two leading goals of the strike force are: (1) serving outstanding felony warrants on youthful offenders wanted for violent/ firearms offenses, which has resulted in approximately 1,100 apprehensions since November of 1993; and (2) conducting warrant sweeps in the city's housing developments, which has led to nearly 300 arrests. Besides specially assigned Boston police officers, the unit also includes members of the State Police, Boston Housing Authority Police, Department of Correction, Brookline Police, MBTA Police, DYS, Parole Board, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Operation Night Light is a partnership between the Boston Police Department's Youth Violence Strike Force and the Department of Probation. Police and probation officers team up to conduct unannounced home visits after court hours for high-risk youth on probation to ensure that they are complying with the terms of probation. There are many benefits to this approach. It enhances communication between police and probation, and sends a strong message to the youth on probation and in the community that they are being monitored and their behavior has consequences. Programs similar to Operation Night Light, involving intensive field supervision, unannounced visits, and inter-agency partnerships, exist in other areas, such as Operation "Nite Ride" in Lynn. The Night Light model is a promising way to put teeth into the sentence of probation.



Community-Based Juvenile Justice is a model for information-sharing between schools, law enforcement, and other child-oriented organizations, established in the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office. Presently, six District Attorneys' offices in the Commonwealth receive state funding for community-based justice partnerships between the police, the schools, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Probation, and DYS. The goal is to share information to help identify juveniles for priority prosecution, increase safety in schools, and enhance services for at-risk youth. The sharing of information between law enforcement and school personnel has become an important way to promote school safety.



Priority Prosecution Units for Serious and Habitual Juvenile Offenders

In 1984, the state's first specialized juvenile prosecution unit was established by Attorney General Harshbarger, then District Attorney in Middlesex County, to identify, target, and aggressively prosecute serious and habitual juvenile offenders.²¹ The key components of the unit were:

- Special training for juvenile prosecutors and victim-witness advocates to develop in-depth knowledge and expertise regarding the juvenile justice system;

- Careful screening and evaluation of each juvenile case to decide which ones required intensive prosecution; and
- Defined policies and procedures to expedite the processing and adjudication of these priority cases.

The laws regarding trial and sentencing of serious juvenile offenders have changed significantly since the establishment of the Juvenile Priority Prosecution Unit; however, the goals and practices of the unit are still relevant.

Recommendations for Action

1. Establish juvenile prosecution units and Community-Based Juvenile Justice projects statewide to identify and target serious and violent juvenile offenders for priority prosecution.
2. Take aggressive steps to reduce youth access to and possession of firearms.
3. Sustain, amplify, and replicate promising law enforcement initiatives that have helped to reduce youth violence statewide.

1. Establish juvenile prosecution units and Community-Based Juvenile Justice projects statewide to identify and target serious and violent juvenile offenders for priority prosecution.

For more than ten years, police and prosecutors have witnessed the benefits of information-sharing and specialized juvenile prosecution units in identifying and prosecuting serious youthful offenders. Recent changes in the law regarding the trial and sentencing of juvenile offenders, which became effective in 1996, enable prosecutors to seek adult sentences for a wide range of serious juvenile offenses.²² The legal changes give prosecutors a powerful tool for sanctioning hard-core juvenile offenders, and underscore the importance of effective screening and processing of all juvenile cases from the earliest stages. While some of the District Attorneys' Offices have been carrying out these practices for some time, there is still variation from county to county. Juvenile prosecution units and Community-Based Juvenile Justice projects should become the norm statewide.

2. Take aggressive steps to reduce youth access to and possession of firearms.

“Handguns have dramatically changed the relationship that children have with violence. When I was growing up, we learned very early that there were real consequences to violence and you found that you couldn't beat everybody. You couldn't win every fight, so you began to shut up . . . We began to really learn about limits and boundaries. [But today] there are some young people who've never run into a boundary that they don't think they can simply blast their way through if they have enough firepower. That is very heady stuff for a 13- or 14- or 15- year-old to have to deal with.”

Geoffrey Canada, October 24, 1995

As Geoffrey Canada explains, the availability of firearms, particularly handguns, has had a profound impact on the nature of youth violence today. Criminologist Alfred Blumstein characterized this impact by noting:

“The recklessness and bravado that often characterize teenage behavior, combined with their lack of skill in settling disputes other than through physical force, transform what once would have been fist fights with outcomes no more serious than a bloody nose into shootings with much more lethal consequences because guns are present.”²³

Youth violence has become much more devastating and deadly due to firearms. Yet, as the Boston Gun Project reveals, guns are in demand by juveniles, and readily available. Therefore, our response must be multifaceted and comprehensive—attacking the youth gun problem from both the supply side and the demand side of the equation. Listed below are specific examples of what can and must be done, based on the presentations and discussions at our luncheon series:

- **Cracking Down on Gun Traffickers and Unlawful Gun Possession**

Law enforcement techniques that target the *gun traffickers* who deal to young people, and the *juveniles who possess guns*, can make a difference in the level of juvenile gun violence. Operation Cease Fire and the Boston Gun Project, described earlier, are examples of collaborative efforts to disrupt the illicit juvenile gun market in Boston.

- **Laws and Regulations**

- The Attorney General has promulgated *consumer protection regulations* that ban the sale of “junk guns,” dangerous and poorly-made handguns, and require safety features on all handguns sold in the state. First in the nation, these consumer protection regulations will be fully implemented by July 1998.
- The Attorney General has filed legislation for several years to eliminate major gaps in our state *gun licensing laws*. House Bill No. 3691, *An Act Relative To Firearms*, amends the state gun licensing laws to strengthen the authority of police to refuse to issue, to suspend, or to revoke gun permits for dangerous people and convicted criminals. Current loopholes in the gun licensing laws enable convicted criminals and other dangerous people to obtain firearms lawfully. Tightening the laws to keep firearms out of the hands of serious criminals will help to reduce the availability of firearms.
- Another necessary legislative change is to *ban assault weapons* in Massachusetts. For several years, the Attorney General has sponsored legislation to ban assault weapons and impose stricter penalties for certain firearms offenses. Assault weapons are the weapons of choice of many dangerous individuals, and have increasingly been

used in killings of law enforcement personnel and innocent children caught in the crossfire.

- **Public Education, Data Collection, and Community Action**

- Efforts should continue to raise *public awareness and education* regarding the realities, costs, benefits, and risks of gun ownership and gun injury. There is now a growing body of research regarding the increased risks for gun injury that accompany the presence of a gun in the home, and gun ownership generally. A gun in the home is 43 times more likely to kill a family member, child, or friend, than it is to kill an intruder.²⁴ The medical expenses related to gun injuries are also under-publicized. For example, taxpayers bear an estimated 80% of the cost of direct medical expenditures for gun violence.²⁵ Health care providers, the media, public health professionals, and educators should all join in raising public awareness and to promote and support sensible gun policies and practices.

- *Research, data collection, and evaluation* are needed to provide the basis for policies and programs, to evaluate effectiveness, and to help target resources.

The *Weapon Related Injury Surveillance System* (WRISS) is the first surveillance system in the nation to track statewide fatal and nonfatal weapon injuries. The information provided by WRISS is the foundation for interventions, education, and enforcement. Because of the WRISS program, data have been compiled that depict the extent, frequency, location, and nature of weapons-related injuries in the state. The information is an important tool for law enforcement officers who can use the data to identify and target specific neighborhoods where youth gun violence is prevalent. Although WRISS is a tremendous resource, continued funding for the program has been uncertain. The cost of maintaining the program is approximately \$200,000. The Department of Public Health and the Legislature should not allow this program to lapse.

- *Community action and advocacy* is essential. Groups such as *Stop Handgun Violence* and *Citizens for Safety* have generated a meaningful dialogue about firearms that is promoting change. Their efforts, and the efforts of similar organizations, to raise public awareness, promote firearms safety, advocate for legislative reform, and get guns off the streets through gun buy-back programs, are critically important.

3. Sustain, amplify, and replicate promising law enforcement initiatives that have helped to reduce youth violence statewide.

In Boston and other cities in Massachusetts, we have seen that building partnerships and coalitions enhances our ability to fight crime and restore safety. Programs such as those outlined above are just some examples of cooperative law enforcement strategies that can make a difference.

The initiatives cover a continuum of crime fighting approaches, from “order maintenance” techniques that aim to improve the quality of life in a community, to neutralizing gang violence and gang-related homicide. While each initiative is structured to advance unique goals, they share certain key ingredients, or “staples for success.” By examining these staples, communities across the state can identify, replicate, adapt, and expand innovative law enforcement approaches to reduce youth violence.

Staples for Successful Law Enforcement Initiatives

- Partnerships
 - Community-Based and Community-Driven Efforts
 - Targeted Resources
 - Committed Leadership
 - Information Sharing
-
- **Partnerships** between law enforcement agencies and across disciplines are crucial for combating crime. Partnerships enable agencies working with the same population of youth to share information, coordinate efforts, and maximize resources. Interagency partnerships have dramatically improved our ability to identify, prosecute, and strictly sanction hard-core offenders, reduce the incidence of gang violence, and interrupt the juvenile gun market.
 - **Community-Based and Community-Driven Efforts** are key components of many promising law enforcement initiatives. Programs such as the SNI include members of the community as integral partners in crime reduction efforts. The cooperation has opened the door for law enforcement officers and members of the community to listen, share information, define problems, and set priorities for addressing problems.
 - **Targeted Resources** focuses resources and efforts in the geographic areas where crime and violence are concentrated. Working together, police, prosecutors, probation officers, and others can identify “hot spots,” or neighborhoods that experience high levels of violence, and concentrate enforcement efforts to suppress violent eruptions in these locations.
 - **Committed Leadership** is a necessary element. While much of the actual work is done on the neighborhood level, coordinated law enforcement efforts have been, and must continue to be, supported by the leadership of the participating agencies and the community.
 - **Information Sharing** is truly at the core of these components. Information sharing, when appropriate, makes it possible for coordinated efforts to move forward. Too often youth-related professionals work in isolation, and deal with small aspects of a larger, multi-dimensional problem. Information sharing breaks such seclusion, and facilitates the development of comprehensive responses.

We know how to pull together to reduce the level of violence in our communities. However, we can not rest on our successes. We must continue to identify new approaches, and replicate our success across the Commonwealth.

SECTION TWO

Identifying, Building, and Mobilizing Community Resources to Prevent Youth Violence

Findings

- Police and prosecutors cannot deal with youth violence prevention alone. Every segment of the community must join in the response to youth violence.
- Every community has a range of assets and resources that can contribute to prevention efforts.

It is evident, as our luncheon series revealed, that the strongest power base for addressing youth violence is at the local level. Communities know firsthand about the resources, assets, challenges, and particular gaps that exist. They are also best situated to develop bold, innovative programs to address these challenges and create solutions that fit the specific needs of their neighborhoods.

Goals

- Identify and mobilize community assets for preventing violence.
- Define existing gaps and set priorities for action.
- Leverage new commitments and private resources to support violence prevention initiatives.

Every community has a range of assets that can contribute to youth violence prevention. The major challenge for a community is to decide the best way to identify and marshal its resources to prevent violence and encourage community development. How can we enlighten all segments of the community to the fact that everyone stands to gain from promoting child welfare and reducing youth violence? The recommendations below are intended to give communities ideas for an action plan to address youth violence prevention.

Recommendations for Action

1. Establish violence prevention councils in every community to guide violence prevention efforts.
2. Conduct a “community assessment” to identify and coordinate local resources.
3. Focus community assessment on early childhood resources within the community to strengthen violence prevention efforts.
4. Involve local youth in community planning and the development of strategies to prevent youth violence.
5. Create a network of community-based services to promote early intervention with at-risk children as soon as they are identified.

1. Establish violence prevention councils in every community to guide violence prevention efforts.

As a first step, we recommend that communities establish a local violence prevention council to coordinate enforcement, prevention/early intervention, and community revitalization efforts. To be most effective, there must be broad representation of individuals, organizations, and local leaders. Many examples exist of communities that have established local councils to steer crime prevention efforts. For example, the city of Springfield established a Violence Prevention Task Force, which has been in existence for almost five years. The task force consists of nearly all of the stakeholders in the community, including the District Attorney’s Office, the Mayor’s Office, representatives from community-based organizations and schools, the Attorney General’s Office, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

2. Conduct a “community assessment” to identify and coordinate local resources.

We suggest that every violence prevention council conduct a thorough *assessment* of the community to map out the assets, resources, and challenges that exist, and the desired goals. The community assessment provides a snapshot of the present status of the community, and a blueprint for action. Undertaking a rigorous community assessment can be a catalyst for action and problem solving. Each community has a unique array of assets, capabilities, and resources that can contribute to preventing youth violence. Police, schools, community colleges, universities, religious groups, hospitals, businesses, cultural groups, libraries, clubs, parks, courts, streetworkers, youth, private nonprofit organizations, and public dollars, are all examples of vital resources that can be tapped. The key is to identify all of the assets within a community and connect them in ways that enhance their effectiveness.

Prevention Checkpoints

What resources can we mobilize for:

- ✓ Maternal and prenatal care?
- ✓ Family support, e.g., newborn home visiting?
- ✓ Child care?
- ✓ Preschool and early learning?
- ✓ Physical and mental health services?
- ✓ School-based violence prevention, e.g., peer mediation?
- ✓ After-school activities?
- ✓ Truancy and dropout prevention?
- ✓ Alternative education?
- ✓ Mentoring?
- ✓ School-to-work programs?
- ✓ Jobs for youth?

3. Focus community assessment on early childhood resources within the community to strengthen violence prevention efforts.

Many community councils, for valid reasons, focus largely on law enforcement strategies and intervention programs targeted to teenagers. However, these councils can also play a central role in the community's efforts to establish a comprehensive primary prevention strategy, by devoting specific attention to early childhood resources and efforts within the community. Two steps can help accomplish this goal:

- (1) Councils can expand their "target population" to include infants and young children *as well as* teens; and
- (2) Councils can actively enlist organizations that may not traditionally have had a seat at the table—such as preschools, elementary schools, hospitals, and health care centers—but that can provide information about the status of young children in the community.

By explicitly defining "early childhood" as a focus and as a priority, the councils can coordinate and initiate efforts that will help to provide children with a healthy and safe start. Programs focused on prenatal and infant development, child care, early education, and parenting, are examples of these efforts. Ultimately, creating a continuum of care for children in the early years of life will reduce the need for intervention efforts and crime fighting tactics down the line.

4. Involve local youth in community planning and the development of strategies to prevent youth violence.

"Seeing kids like us who want to make a difference is what is going to help. Younger kids are going to look up to us. They are going to see us making a difference, and they are going to want to follow us—follow our example. So, I think it can really start with us."

Josh, Student, May 1, 1997

All too often, youth are overlooked as one of the most powerful assets we have to combat youth violence. Most young people are not involved in violent crime, and can make essential contributions to their communities when afforded the opportunity. Young people can offer unique perspectives on violence prevention because they have firsthand knowledge of the issues and challenges facing their peers. They can also serve as valuable role models, helping to deglamorize violence and fostering a climate of intolerance for it.

Specific projects and programs can help connect youth with their community in ways that increase their self-esteem and level of competency, while at the same time improve the quality of life of the whole community. The Dorchester Youth Collaborative (DYC) is an example of this type of program. DYC is a Police Community Partnership program of the Safe Neighborhood Initiative in Dorchester. DYC provides services to a multiracial group of high-risk youth and gang associates who are between the ages of 14 and 17. Besides services such as counseling, educational support, mediation, and recreational activities, DYC also uses a “peer role model” approach to engage youth in extended community service projects.

5. Create a network of community-based services to promote early intervention with at-risk children as soon as they are identified.

Professionals who work on the “front lines,” such as police, teachers, and health care providers, often report that it is not difficult to identify children who are at-risk. The difficulty is knowing what to do to help these children. Most of us do not want to turn a blind eye to a child in need—we just do not know how to intervene.

We know, for example, that children who are the victims of violence are at great risk for becoming either perpetrators of violence or re-victimized. Shocking preliminary data from Boston hospitals show children who were treated for a violence-related injury are ten times more likely to return to the emergency room for another violence-related injury within one year.²⁶ Thus, every time a young person walks out of an emergency room without any follow-up services after a violent injury, we run the risk of missing a critical opportunity to prevent another violent crime from occurring.

We must overcome unnecessary obstacles to providing at-risk children and families with swift and effective intervention services. For example, in nearly every community across the state, professionals—such as teachers, health care providers, and police—encounter at-risk children, but are unable to provide the necessary intervention services; are not aware of the services that exist in the community; and do not have a way to connect the children with appropriate services in the community.

Communities should confront this problem head-on. Professionals who identify at-risk children and families should have access to a network of community-based services, and the tools to link at-risk children to those services immediately. The City of Boston has established the Youth Service Providers Network, which is made up of successful youth service organizations, in partnership with the Boston Police. The Network created a Case Management Referral System, which is a tool used by police officers to obtain services for at-risk youth whom they encounter. Police provide social workers based in the local police stations with the names and phone numbers

of youth in need, and the social workers reach out to the young people and their families to create a plan for services provided by agencies in the Network.

We should expand upon such innovative approaches, to enable professionals from a range of disciplines—schools, hospitals, religious institutions, and Community-Based Juvenile Justice projects—to reach at-risk youth and their families as soon as they are identified.

SECTION THREE

Early Prevention: Building the Basics

Violence prevention is nothing more complicated than the basic care and protection of children from the moment they're born, or even before they're born.

Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., February 12, 1997

Findings

- The first three years of life are critically important for a child's brain development, and have a profound impact throughout the life span.²⁷
- Children who have been abused or have witnessed abuse are twice as likely to engage in violence as adolescents than their non-abused peers.²⁸
- In Massachusetts, the number of women in the paid workforce with children between the ages of 0 and 5 years has more than doubled since 1970, reaching approximately 60% in 1990.²⁹
- For every dollar spent on high-quality early education and care, \$7 are saved in remedial education, criminal justice spending, and welfare costs.³⁰

To tackle the problem of youth violence effectively, we must begin at ground zero, quite literally, before birth and throughout the first few years of life. We now know that this is the critical time for prevention efforts, because the experiences that children endure during these years significantly influence their futures.

There are clear connections between early life experiences—such as child abuse and neglect and children witnessing violence—and tragic life outcomes. If we start with proper care from the outset, we are less likely to need drastic remedial and punitive measures later.

Goals

- Build a strong foundation of support for the basic care and protection of children, including safe homes.
- Ensure families have access to five indispensable services to help prevent child maltreatment and promote the health and well-being of children and families:
 - Maternal and prenatal care;
 - Health and mental health care;
 - Family support and parenting services;
 - Child care; and
 - Early education and preschool.

Recommendations for Action

1. Enact newborn home visiting legislation to cover all first-time mothers under the age of 21.
2. Establish a comprehensive continuum of early childhood care and education for children from birth to age 6.
3. Establish mechanisms to identify and immediately respond to children who witness violence.

1. Enact newborn home visiting legislation to cover all first-time mothers under the age of 21.

A significant amount of research has linked child abuse and neglect to crime and delinquency.³¹ Consider these statistics: 78% of the nation's prisoners were abused as children.³² Children who have been abused or who have witnessed abuse, are twice as likely to engage in violence as adolescents than their non-abused peers.³³ The Department of Youth Services has estimated that the rate of violent crime perpetrated by juveniles who suffered physical abuse as a child is double the rate of a comparison group.³⁴ Thus, any program with a proven track record of decreasing the level of child abuse in the community can be a potent anti-crime tool.

Newborn home visiting is a model that has proved its effectiveness in reducing child abuse and neglect and promoting the healthy development of children. Studies conducted in Hawaii, the state with the oldest comprehensive home visiting program, show that less than 1% of over 2,000 high-risk, young families initially served by a home visitor had any reported child abuse and neglect.³⁵ The program was credited with decreasing the overall abuse and neglect of at-risk children in the state of Hawaii from 19% to 4%.³⁶

Home visiting decreases abuse and neglect and out-of-home placement by strengthening parenting skills, enhancing parental involvement with infants, facilitating the early detection of child abuse and neglect, and reducing emergency room visits and injury rates. Moreover, home visiting enhances children's health by improving the use of prenatal services and encouraging full immunization, well-child care visits, and optimal nutrition.

Massachusetts has already expressed a commitment to newborn home visiting. In the FY 1998 state budget, the Legislature approved \$5 million for the creation of a newborn home visitation program for teen mothers—a truly commendable step. The pending legislation, House Bill No. 3062 and Senate Bill No. 479, would build upon this important effort by extending the age of eligible first-time mothers from 19 to 21, and guaranteeing a multi-year commitment to newborn home visitation in the Commonwealth.

2. Establish a comprehensive continuum of early childhood care and education for children from birth to age 6.

Research confirms that early childhood care and education can be remarkably effective in reducing violent and delinquent behavior later in life. A mounting body of research suggests that

high-quality, structured child care and early learning programs can prevent violence and delinquency from occurring in the first place, and can result in significant long-term financial savings.

A landmark study on the benefits of early childhood programs in reducing violence is the High Scope/Perry Preschool study, which examined the lives of 123 children who participated in the Perry Preschool Program. When they attended the preschool, the children were living in poverty and considered at-risk for future criminal behavior. The children were evaluated at age 19 and again at age 27, and compared with a similar group of children who did not attend preschool. The study found many long-lasting effects of the program, including dramatically lower delinquency and arrest rates for the preschool attendees. Only 7% of the preschool participants had five or more arrests, while 35% of those who did not participate became repetitive offenders. A striking cost-benefit analysis showed that for every dollar invested in high quality preschool programs, *seven* dollars are saved in criminal justice spending, welfare costs, and remedial education services.³⁷

Because it is evident that prevention efforts need to start early, the time has come to think of the early years of a child's life—particularly the care and education a child receives from birth to age 6—in a comprehensive and systematic way. The need for high-quality and accessible early childhood services has never been greater. In Massachusetts, the number of women in the paid workforce with children between the ages of 0 and 5 more than doubled since 1970, reaching approximately 60% in 1990.³⁸

Accordingly, there should be a comprehensive, well-funded system of early care and education services for children. The mission of this system would be to increase access to high-quality child care and education for families, and deliver a comprehensive range of services to young children. Such an approach would not only enable children to enter school ready to learn and participate, but would result in a long-term cost savings.

Families across the Commonwealth face the challenge of finding and affording high-quality child care services and early learning programs for children between the ages of 0 and 6. Despite an overwhelming demand, many families are unable to access these services, and quality is inconsistent. Hardest hit in Massachusetts are the families in poverty and low-income working families. Child care costs an average of \$5,000 to \$8,000 per child per year, and that means for a family with one worker earning a minimum wage, child care costs for one child represent 46% to 73% of that family's income.³⁹ State funding for child care for low-income working families decreased by 20% between 1989 and 1996, leaving an estimated 10,000 families on income-eligible waiting lists.⁴⁰

The quality of child care and preschool programs is an equally important concern. A 1995 national study, *The Costs, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers*, reported that most children in child care centers in the United States are receiving “poor or mediocre care, with almost half of the infants and toddlers in rooms of less than minimal quality.”⁴¹ The report called the situation of infant and toddler care in this country “of grave concern . . . [a situation that] endangers children's health and safety . . . [and] may compromise children's ability to enter school ready to learn.”⁴² Currently, early childhood service providers are the lowest paid human service workers in Massachusetts, earning approximately one-half the salary of comparably qualified public school teachers. The quality of early childhood programming depends largely on the ability to attract and

keep a skilled and stable workforce of teachers and caregivers. We must improve the compensation and opportunities for professional development of child care and preschool professionals.

Recently, two significant steps to address problems related to child care have been taken. The 1998 budget included an increase in funding for child care for low income and working families, the first significant increase since 1989. Advocates point out that this increase will only make a dent in the massive income-eligible waiting lists.⁴³ In addition, on July 1, 1997, the "Office of Child Care Services" (OCCS) was established. Formerly known as the Office For Children, OCCS will be responsible for consolidating all of the subsidized child care units from the Department of Social Services, Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services under one agency.

Although these actions reflect a willingness to eliminate fragmentation for child care services, more work needs to be done to create a complete and seamless system of child care and early education.

We should take action to:

- Create a coordinated system of early childhood services;
- Increase the affordability and accessibility of high-quality child care and education;⁴⁴
- Centralize responsibility for services for children from birth to age 6 within one agency;
- Include parental/family support as an integral component of early childhood efforts;
- Create a "career ladder" certification and professional development program for early care and education providers, and promote adequate compensation for them;
- Increase incentives to encourage family day care providers to become better trained; and
- Help cities and towns in moving from half-day to full-day kindergarten programs.

Presently, a number of bills are pending in the Legislature to unify and coordinate early care and education.⁴⁵

3. Establish mechanisms to identify and immediately respond to children who witness violence.

Children who are the victims and witnesses of violence are at a much higher risk for engaging in violence later in life. The injuries of young victims sometimes are not readily visible. In addition, young victims and witnesses of violence often remain silent and go undetected. Immediate intervention services are vital for these young people.

Support and counseling must be provided to children who witness violence and to their families as soon as they are identified, to counteract their traumatic experiences. To enable this to happen, we must train the people who work with children to identify these victims, and to link them with necessary services and support.

The Child Witness to Violence Project (CWVP) at Boston Medical Center is an example of one Massachusetts program that provides services to these victims and their families. The CWVP also trains professionals in the community who are likely to encounter children who witness

violence. In April 1997, the Office of the Attorney General and the CWVP were awarded a grant, funded under the Violence Against Women Act, to conduct a comprehensive, statewide training program to train human service professionals, police, probation officers, health care providers, school personnel, parents, and others to use existing resources to target and respond to children affected by domestic violence, and to build on similar programs that are currently working in certain communities. We must build on these efforts to ensure that every community is equipped to intervene with the children who witness violence in their homes *and* in their neighborhoods.

Benchmarks for the Future

1. Universal access to prenatal care.
2. Comprehensive health care coverage from infancy through adulthood for all children.
3. High-quality, available parenting and family support programs in every community.

1. Universal access to prenatal care.

Mounting evidence shows that children born with developmental and cognitive disabilities face a greater risk for involvement in violence and delinquency later in life.⁴⁶ We know that women who receive a full course of prenatal care are far more likely to deliver healthy, full-term, normal-weight babies than women who do not receive such care. We also know that an infant's capacity for learning in the critical years following birth is intimately tied to healthy brain development *in utero*. Thus, the prenatal care that women receive has profound and long-term implications.

In Massachusetts, those least likely to receive adequate prenatal care⁴⁷ are teenage mothers, and mothers from minority groups.⁴⁸ In setting goals for the future, we must strive to achieve universal access to prenatal care, with a particular focus on reducing the disparities that exist in the distribution of prenatal care, and overcoming racial, cultural, linguistic, and geographical barriers to accessing prenatal care services.

2. Comprehensive health care coverage from infancy through adulthood for all children.

The first level for prevention is really getting down to the basics of comprehensive preventive health services for children and the care and protection provided by nurturing caregivers. Very specifically, we're talking about comprehensive primary care and high-quality child care that is fully implemented and fully funded.

Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., February 12, 1997

We must continue to strive to provide all children in Massachusetts with high quality, comprehensive physical and mental health care from infancy through adulthood. This includes preventive well-child care and catastrophic coverage when needed. We have recently made progress toward attaining this goal. An infusion of federal aid allows for the expansion of Medicaid to thousands of children in Massachusetts. While approximately 50,000 children remain ineligible

to receive Medicaid, the Commonwealth's Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP) has been enacted to provide coverage for those children.⁴⁹ The CMSP provides a safety net that did not previously exist, and therefore is a very important step. Nevertheless, the CMSP is a much more limited form of coverage as compared with Medicaid, leaving critical services, such as mental health care, uncovered.

We must also take steps to address the disparities that exist along racial and economic lines in terms of the quality and quantity of health care for children. For instance, Massachusetts recently took pride in the fact that the 1996 Annie E. Casey *Kids Count Data Report*, a national ranking on the well-being of children, documented a major decline in the overall rate of infant mortality in the Commonwealth. A closer look at this information, however, reveals that, for example, the mortality rate of African-American infants (16.1%) is more than three times greater than that of white infants (5.2%).⁵⁰

Based on this information, we must continue efforts to provide comprehensive health care for children, with a particular view toward:

- ✓ Expanding the benefits covered under the CMSP to match those covered under Medicaid;
- ✓ Conducting extensive outreach by those responsible for carrying out the expansion of Medicaid, including the Department of Public Health and the Department of Medical Assistance, to ensure that all children get the care they need;
- ✓ Overcoming barriers to accessing health care in each community, including those pertaining to culture, language, and geography; and
- ✓ Eliminating racial and economic disparities in the care provided.

3. High-quality parenting and family support programs in every community.

For many families, the combination of stress, inadequate preparation for parenting, and an inability to access sufficient support, creates a heightened risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Parent and family support programs can help to address these factors and reduce the risks of child maltreatment.

The seminal *Starting Points* report by the Carnegie Corporation's Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children, identified four key areas that constitute vital starting points for young children and their families:

- Promote responsible parenthood;
- Guarantee quality child care choices;
- Ensure good health and protection; and
- Mobilize communities to support young children and their families.⁵¹

Effective parenting education and support can build on families' strengths, helping parents to be more knowledgeable, confident, and capable. The Carnegie Task Force recommends that parents

have access to parent education and parent-to-parent support, especially when their children are infants and toddlers.

There are many models of successful parenting education and family support programs that can be adapted to suit specific community and individual needs. We must focus on supporting families as a key step in improving the well-being of children in the Commonwealth.

SECTION FOUR

Early Intervention: Building Safe Schools, Safe Spaces, and Safe Futures

Findings

- The peak hours for violent juvenile crime are from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.⁵²
- Adolescents spend approximately 40% of their time not involved in structured activities such as school or work.⁵³
- Experts estimate that between five and seven million “latchkey” children are home alone after school, and that roughly 35% of twelve-year-olds are regularly left alone while their parents are at work.⁵⁴
- Truancy and dropping out of school are two of the greatest predictors of delinquency.
- There are proven benefits, including lower juvenile arrest rates, of after-school programs.⁵⁵
- There are proven benefits, including a decreased risk for engaging in violence, from mentoring.⁵⁶

“An open letter to my brother. Thank you for quitting the gang. When you were 11 years old, the age that I am now, you looked up and saw our older brother selling drugs and running the gangs. First you looked up at them and then you followed them. Every time I said good-bye, I was scared that it would be forever. I watched Mom looking everywhere for you, and I knew that she wouldn’t find you, because you were on the corner selling drugs.

Then one day you quit the gang and started hanging out with the Dorchester Youth Collaborative [DYC] guys. When you were home, you never answered the phone. When your fellows from the gang called, I used to lie for you. I told them that you were out with your girlfriend and you didn’t even have a girlfriend. Thank you for quitting the gang. I don’t even think of following the gang. I will follow you . . .

Kids . . . have a lot of chances to [do] bad things. It is easy to steal cars, sell drugs and join gangs. Meanwhile, big bro, we have [chances] to go to a safe haven youth center. There are a lot of kids just like us who don’t have a safe haven to go to . . .

Letter from Anthony, age 11, to his brother, as read by his friend Chandan,
May 1, 1997

Goals

- Ensure that each and every school is a safe place, where real learning can occur.
- Provide school-age children and youth with safe, structured places to go, and enriching activities to engage in, when they are not in school.
- Ensure that youth have hope for their futures and the skills to accomplish their goals.

For many young people, staying on the right track and out of trouble is a constant struggle. Society's challenge is to offer them positive alternatives to a life of crime, because a young person who does not believe in the future is not easily deterred by the threat of incarceration. To be able to make positive choices, every young person must have access to four important things:

- Rigorous, high-quality education;
- Guidance and support from caring adults;
- Meaningful opportunities and creative outlets; and
- Safe, structured activities and spaces.

Any one of these critical components could be a beacon that steers a young person away from violence and delinquency.

Recommendations for Action

1. Make standard in all public schools from kindergarten through grade twelve effective peer mediation programs, substance abuse prevention programs, teen dating violence prevention projects, and violence prevention curricula, to improve the safety of school-aged youth.
2. Develop swift and effective responses to truancy and dropping out of school.
3. Provide alternative education for students excluded from school.
4. Ensure that all children have a caring adult or mentor in their lives.
5. Develop high-quality and safe programming and activities for children and youth during the hours that they are not in school.
6. Develop collaborative efforts to provide jobs for youth and expand school-to-work partnerships to prepare all interested students for the world of work.

1. Make standard in all public schools from kindergarten through grade twelve effective peer mediation programs, substance abuse prevention programs, teen dating violence prevention projects, and violence prevention curricula, to improve the safety of school-aged youth.

We know that children and youth have many opportunities to engage in risky and life-threatening behaviors, including violence. Because of the unique opportunity that schools have to have an impact on the attitudes and behaviors of children, we frequently turn to schools to help us deal with an array of social problems. Schools are also often the place where these problems surface. It is imperative that we teach children the skills to avoid violence and other dangerous behaviors, including tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use; risky sexual behavior; and association with gangs; to maximize school safety and promote early intervention.

We should support school districts in developing effective prevention programs and other interventions beginning in elementary school. Such measures may include:

- Drug and alcohol abuse resistance programs;
- Violence prevention and avoidance programs;
- Peer mediation programs; and
- Strengthening resources for guidance counselors to intervene early with troubled students.

These programs must be comprehensive and sustained throughout a child's school career. Promoting positive behavior, and developing skills that help children to avoid *all* types of risk-taking conduct, can often be integrated into the existing curricula, culture, and climate of the school. However, there are a variety of approaches, including specific curricula, programs, and presentations, that are available to help schools address troublesome behavior and teach prevention.

✠ **SCORE:** Peer mediation programs, such as the Attorney General's SCORE ^{57, 58} (Student Conflict Resolution Experts) program, can help change the climate and culture of the school such that fewer conflicts erupt into violence. The driving force of SCORE is *peer* mediation—students in conflict with each other voluntarily meet in private with neutral student mediators, and together they come to an agreement that everyone can live with. Teachers, principals, and students routinely report that SCORE has changed the atmosphere in their schools by:

- Decreasing physical violence;
- Promoting respect for diversity;
- Resolving conflict; and
- Developing life skills.

SCORE mediators are drawn from student volunteers representative of the student body. Once trained, they mediate a variety of issues, ranging from minor disagreements between two students to long-standing or major conflicts between large volatile groups of students. Remarkably, statistics from SCORE reveal that 97% of all the cases mediated are resolved successfully. Moreover, in schools that experienced a high level of racial tension before initiating a SCORE program, the number of conflicts involving racial issues have dropped.

Currently, there are 22 SCORE programs in middle schools and high schools in 19 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Peer mediation programs can reduce violence in the schools, and should be in every middle school and high school in Massachusetts.

- ❖ **Violence Prevention Curricula:** Many schools have implemented curricula, such as the Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents created by Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith of the Harvard School of Public Health, to develop skills that help children and youth avoid violence. Until recently, only anecdotal evidence existed to demonstrate that violence prevention curricula achieved the results of reducing violent behavior. However, recent studies have confirmed that these curricula can work.⁵⁹
- ❖ **Substance Abuse Prevention Programs:** Research indicates that properly designed school-based substance abuse prevention programs that build skills for identifying and resisting pressures to use controlled substances, and aim to improve general competence and self-esteem, are effective in reducing substance abuse among adolescents. Two other elements that are key to effective substance abuse prevention are early intervention and the use of ongoing intervention during the high school years to strengthen and sustain the positive effects accrued earlier.
- ❖ **Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programs:** A 1994 report by the Office of the Commissioner of Probation documented that in the span of one school year, 757 domestic violence restraining orders (including those requested by parents) were issued by the district and probate courts of the Commonwealth against adolescents between 11 and 17 years of age.⁶⁰ Dating violence among teenagers is a serious problem and can jeopardize school safety. To address teen dating violence, we recommend that schools develop a comprehensive response to the issue, which includes: (1) developing a written school policy; (2) training for the school staff and community to increase awareness; (3) establishing school-based counseling, intervention services, and referral resources; and (4) fostering a school climate that has “zero tolerance” for dating violence.⁶¹

2. Develop swift and effective responses to truancy and dropping out of school.

We know that truancy and dropping out of school are two of the most significant predictors for violence and delinquency. For example, recent studies in Dade County, Florida, documented that between 75-85% of serious juvenile offenders had been truant or chronically absent from school.⁶² In addition, the chances of ending up on public assistance, in prison, and impoverished are all associated with truancy and not completing high school. Thus, effective intervention with truant students at an early point may help prevent crime and save money and resources down the line.

The crime prevention benefits of anti-truancy measures have been well documented. According to the United States Department of Education, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, reported a 33%

decrease in daytime burglaries and a 29% decrease in daytime aggravated batteries since the creation of their Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression initiative. Also, Rohner Park, California, showed a 75% decrease in daytime burglaries after initiating their anti-truancy program.⁶³

There are a number of promising programs and strategies in communities around the country that target truancy reduction. School systems should work in partnership with local police, the district attorney's office, parents, and local service providers to develop effective responses to truancy in their communities. We have identified some common components of effective truancy initiatives, including: forming multi-agency collaborations (schools, police, prosecutors, and social services); identifying and addressing the root causes of truancy; involving parents in truancy prevention and intervention efforts; and developing firm and swift responses to truant students.

3. Provide alternative education for students excluded from school.

Every student, teacher, and parent deserves a school that is safe, secure, and conducive to learning. We cannot tolerate violence, drugs, or seriously disruptive behavior that undermines the public education system and compromises the ability of teachers to teach and children to learn. Accordingly, we must continue to support efforts to address violence and deal with disruption of learning within our schools, including, when necessary, the exclusion of students who engage in violent or unlawful behavior. It is also important to remember, however, that the exclusion of students from school has ramifications beyond the school building: youth who are not in school are more likely to engage in criminal activity, violent behavior, or risky sexual activity.⁶⁴

While a few students who are excluded from school have engaged in such serious wrongdoing that they must be placed in the juvenile or adult correctional system where they may receive education, many others will remain on the street with no opportunity for productive activity unless alternative educational arrangements are in place for them. The number of excluded students is growing in Massachusetts: between the 1993-94 and 1995-96 school years, the number of students excluded from all levels of school increased from 958 to 1,482.⁶⁵ More than two-thirds of these students were excluded for thirty days or more, and of the 1,482 excluded in 1995-96, almost 40% received no alternative education.⁶⁶ Additionally, in 1996 an estimated 8,177 students dropped out of high school.⁶⁷ If offered an alternative means to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent, many of these students might take advantage of the opportunity.

We recognize the very real financial constraints on school systems that make it difficult for many of them, particularly the smaller ones, to fully fund alternative educational programs. On the other hand, there are enormous long-term costs for society as a whole if students are excluded from school without being provided with alternative education. These include the costs of youth correctional services, adult incarceration, and public assistance, associated with a poorly educated population.

The following steps, some of which were included in the 1994 report of the Commission on Alternative Education, should be taken now:

- Reintegrate students into the public schools where appropriate, and where they no longer pose a threat to other students and teachers.

- Provide a variety of alternative programs for students who cannot be safely and appropriately placed in a traditional public school setting. Ideally, such programs should address the many needs of out-of-school youth, and offer not only educational skills, but school-to-work experiences, job development and placement, and flexible hours or child care, if needed.
- Develop creative alternatives for funding such programs that would not drain resources from traditional public schools. These might include separate state grant funding, awarding charters to alternative programs as part of the charter school program, retention by the state Department of Education of a percentage of the per pupil cost of the excluded student to provide seed money for alternative programs, and multi-district programs that could pool funding to maximize resources.⁶⁸

4. Ensure that all children have a caring adult or mentor in their lives.

We must be committed to ensuring that every young person has a relationship with at least one caring adult. For some, this task may seem simple. However, we know that there are fewer adults in families today who are available to provide guidance and care, and that many children grow up without much positive interaction with adults.

An array of studies on resiliency suggests that this abandonment of children is more than just an unfortunate situation—it is also a missed opportunity that may have significant repercussions in the future. A telling study by William Kornblum and Terry Williams followed 900 impoverished children in urban and rural areas across the United States and concluded that “the most significant factor” determining whether or not these teenagers would end up on the street corner or in a stable job “is the presence or absence of adult mentors.”⁶⁹

There is powerful evidence that mentoring works. In a landmark study conducted by Public/Private Ventures, 1,000 young people on the waiting list of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America—mostly urban youth aged 10 to 14—were randomly assigned to two groups. Members of one group were assigned a mentor; members of the other group remained on the waiting list. Comparing the two groups 18 months later, the children with mentors were:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs;
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol;
- 53% less likely to skip school; and
- 33% less likely to hit someone.⁷⁰

Rather than focusing separately on discrete problems such as drugs, alcohol, school dropout, and youth violence—all of which may affect the same child—mentoring deals with all of these problems simultaneously, by addressing the needs of a child as a whole.

Other studies cite supportive adults as a key factor in the resiliency of at-risk children.⁷¹ Anecdotally, many young people have stated their desire for positive role models and adults who would be supportive and caring.⁷² Furthermore, older children benefit by mentoring younger children.⁷³

The challenge is to take mentoring to scale. Of the 12 million at-risk children in the United States, only 300,000 to 400,000 currently receive the benefits of mentoring. As the largest program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America reaches 105,000 young people, with 30,000 more on its waiting list.

Volunteer mentors can have a significant impact on at-risk youth, and can help meet the overwhelming demand for mentors. One effort to recruit volunteer mentors is the Harvard Mentoring Project, an initiative of the Center for Health Communication at the Harvard School of Public Health. The Project is a national mass media campaign designed to promote the widespread acceptance of a community ethic in which individuals accept a shared responsibility for the well-being of all children. Using advertising, entertainment programming, and news, the Project seeks to motivate people to volunteer at existing mentoring projects, and to encourage businesses, religious groups, and civic organizations to launch new mentoring projects. In Massachusetts, there are several examples of employers, including BankBoston, who encourage their employees to become mentors.

Massachusetts has pledged to provide 50,000 additional mentors by the year 2000 as one of five goals of the Massachusetts Summit: The Promise of Our Youth, a statewide campaign inspired by the Presidents' Summit for America's Future led by General Colin Powell in April 1997. This is a goal we fully embrace, and is one piece of a necessary response to provide every child in the Commonwealth with a positive relationship with a caring adult.

5. Develop high-quality and safe programming and activities for children and youth during the hours that they are not in school.

Kids are more at risk between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.—what they call the ‘risk opportunity hours’ . . . Most teenage pregnancies occur between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. Most juvenile delinquencies occur between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.—after school and before parents. It is easy for us to identify the risk factors. What has been difficult is for us to address those factors.

The Honorable Leslie Harris, February 12, 1997

Violence, risky sexual activity, and alcohol and other drug use are behaviors that many young people engage in when adults are out of sight. However, contrary to popular belief, the peak time for these behaviors is not late at night or in the early morning hours. It is right after schools let out—when there is plenty of unsupervised time for many children and youth, including “latchkey” children who are home alone. The solution is clear: we must provide children of all ages with safe, supervised, structured, and stimulating programming after school, and facilitate flexible hours for working parents.

There are many good examples of high-quality after-school and youth programming in Massachusetts' communities. Schools can play a very prominent role in responding to the need for after-school care, by providing after-school programming, implementing longer school days, and reinventing themselves as community schools. To increase after-school opportunities in the Commonwealth, school systems, in cooperation with the larger community, should consider:

Community Schools: Community schools redefine the concept of schools by involving the family, the community, and the workplace to create learning centers for the entire community. Typically, community schools provide academic, extracurricular, recreational, health, social service, and workforce preparation programs for people of all ages, full-time and year-round, and include the participation of residents, public and private organizations, and human service agencies.

Lengthening the School Day and Year: Longer school hours and years have also been adopted in some communities to address the problem of children going home to empty or chaotic homes, where they have little supervision and few enrichment activities. A number of charter schools, including the Boston Renaissance School, which serve inner-city populations, have adopted longer school hours and have concluded that they are beneficial to their students.

The regulations on student learning time adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Education under the Education Reform Act have phased in somewhat longer school days over the past few years, and tightened requirements about what types of activities can be counted as “structured learning time.” Evaluating the impact of these changes is important, and we should consider further scheduling modifications to bridge the gap between academic schedules and those of working parents.

Community-based programs are also an important part of the solution. The YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs are other shining examples of high-quality programming that exist in many areas. Despite these excellent options, the need remains great, and many children still lack safe places to go when school lets out. Communities should examine the availability and quality of after-school programming, and work collaboratively with state and local service providers, businesses, religious groups, and others to fill the void during high-risk hours.

In addition, it is an explicit goal of the Massachusetts Summit to double the number of safe places and structured activities for youth by the year 2000; a Safe Haven Task Force was created specifically to address this issue. The Summit also encourages communities to examine the programming that is currently available for youth, and develop a plan to expand and enhance safe places. We hope that the Summit, and the Safe Haven Task Force in particular, can serve as a valuable resource to communities as they develop safe spaces for children and youth.

6. Develop collaborative efforts to provide jobs for youth and expand school-to-work partnerships to prepare all interested students for the world of work.

For many young people, paid employment is one of the best alternatives they have to “hanging out,” a vital way for them to build self-esteem and to put into practice the skills and knowledge they are accumulating in school. It is important that we focus on: (1) creating more meaningful job opportunities for youth, and (2) preparing teens for the job opportunities so that they are primed to succeed.

Jobs for Youth

The time that is spent out of school is critical for young people. If we are to steer youth away from violence, substance abuse, and a myriad of other negative activities that can result in tragic consequences, we must provide them with positive alternatives. Police and prosecutors have recognized the tremendous impact jobs can have. Working at a meaningful job not only helps young people use their time effectively but it can also provide them with a positive learning experience, invaluable life skills, and a degree of financial independence, as well as enhanced self-esteem.

In Boston and elsewhere, law enforcement officials at all levels have committed themselves to providing job opportunities for youth. Two specific programs, the SNI Jobs for Youth Program and the Boston Jobs Project, aim to place at-risk youth in urban areas in substantive, year-round job placements that will be a stepping stone for their futures. These programs also provide job readiness training for young people and significant support throughout their placements.

In order for such programs to be successful, the business community must be a full partner in efforts to provide jobs for young people. The Private Industry Council, John Hancock, and NYNEX are just some of the organizations that have played a leadership role in the private sector's efforts to address youth employment needs. While many programs have focused primarily on the need to provide summer employment opportunities, jobs during the school year are equally important. We must build upon efforts currently in place and develop collaborations between the business community, schools, and law enforcement to provide meaningful, year-round jobs for young people.

School-to-Work

Presently, 40 school-to-work partnerships, formed under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, exist in Massachusetts. These partnerships, involving schools, businesses, and labor organizations, exist to help young people acquire the knowledge, skills, and information about the labor market they need to make an effective transition from school to career-oriented work. If properly structured, school-to-work partnerships offer students the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment that can enhance their educational experience and prepare them for the realities of working life. The optimal school-to-work experience involves a true partnership between employers and schools, which can benefit both students and the business community. It is important for a school liaison to oversee the worksites, ensuring that jobs are appropriate and in compliance with state and federal laws regarding child labor. That person can also be available to discuss students' and employers' concerns, and to ensure that the work experience is integrated into the students' overall education. School curricula can also be used to integrate workplace issues into the educational experience.

While the purpose of such partnerships is to create more concrete links between academic learning and workplace achievement for all students, they hold particular promise for at-risk and out-of-school youth. Well-designed school-to-work partnerships should be made available to interested students, and there should be a particular emphasis on making them available through alternative education and other programs designed to reach at-risk, chronically truant, or out-of-school youth.

Benchmarks for the Future

1. The first and most important mission of every school is to create an environment in which every student can achieve academically.
2. Media take responsibility for deglamorizing violence and increasing the coverage of positive youth activities.

1. The first and most important mission of every school is to create an environment in which every student can achieve academically.

We now know that high-quality education is one of the most powerful tools any community has for preventing violence. It has long been known that education is one of the only reliable means for breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Poor academic performance and violence are clearly linked.⁷⁴

Considering this information, one of the most valuable contributions schools can make in preventing youth violence is to maintain a clear and unwavering focus on fostering academic achievement for all students. The state Education Reform Act of 1993 renewed the emphasis on high academic performance by creating standards for academic achievement and mandates for a more rigorous academic curriculum. High standards communicate to children that schools and teachers are invested in learning, and that students can succeed.

We must also strive to ensure that students are engaged and active participants in their learning. One of the most effective ways to do this is through small classrooms where teachers have greater opportunities to respond to the specific learning styles of the students, and where positive teacher-student relationships can be developed.⁷⁵ In addition, involving parents and families in the process of educating children is a key element in helping students achieve. While parents may choose different levels of involvement with their children's education, participation at some level must continue to be encouraged by all schools.

2. Media take responsibility for deglamorizing violence and increasing the coverage of positive youth activities.

Depictions of violence are a mainstay of many movies, television programs, news broadcasts, newspapers, and music popular with young people. The effect of violence in the media has been debated for decades. Because of its ubiquitous nature, television—both news and entertainment programming—has been the subject of much of the research.

A number of studies have shown an association between watching violence on television and children's aggressive behavior.⁷⁶ Depictions of violence on television can serve as models for aggressive behavior, and make children more accepting of aggression; heavy exposure to television violence can also desensitize young viewers.⁷⁷

Most experts agree that television violence is not the sole cause of youth violence, but that it is a contributing factor. It is viewed as particularly detrimental to those young people who are especially vulnerable—either because of their environment or the amount of television they view. Some educators have denounced the way in which violence is often depicted: violence frequently is shown as the only alternative to settling disputes, and it often does not show the consequences of violent acts, including the physical and emotional suffering of victims and their loved ones.⁷⁸

Often it becomes the responsibility of parents to gauge the appropriateness of media for their children and to monitor their viewing habits. Parents can find assistance in this task with the recent implementation of a television ratings system based on violent and/or sexual content and crude language; the V-chip, a device that can censor television viewing in the home; and an increase in educational programming geared to children.

There are numerous efforts to mitigate the effects of media violence, including school-based media literacy initiatives, and parent education programs. Using the media in a positive way to educate young people about alternatives to violence is the goal of the “Squash It!” Campaign to Prevent Youth Violence,” currently being conducted by Harvard’s Center for Health Communication. The “Squash It!” Campaign is working with the Hollywood creative community—as well as with professional and collegiate sports leagues and the rap music industry—to promote a social norm that says it is “cool” and smart to walk away from dangerous confrontations. “Squash It!” is a phrase used by inner-city youth in Boston, Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Miami, Kansas City, and other urban centers to signal decisions to disengage from potentially violent confrontations. Since the Campaign was launched in 1994, television producers incorporated the “Squash It!” message in scripts and stage sets of such television programs as “Beverly Hills 90210,” “ER,” “Family Matters,” and “N.Y. Undercover.” Networks have been airing public service announcements (PSAs) that promote the “Squash It!” concept; these PSAs feature young people, leading rap artists, and college basketball and football players. The “Squash It!” Campaign is supported by major grants from the Joyce Foundation and Metropolitan Life Foundation, with in-kind contributions from entertainment companies.

The news media—both television and print—have also been criticized for their depictions of violence. What is particularly bothersome to many young people is that numerous stories about youth are negative. Indeed, a 1994 study by Children Now, a children’s advocacy group, indicated that 40% of stories about young people involve them as perpetrators or victims of crimes.⁷⁹ Newspapers and television news programs could make a positive contribution to the way in which young people are depicted by including positive stories about young people more often.



SECTION FIVE

Coordination of State Systems

Findings

- In 1992, a law was enacted to create a full-time juvenile court system. Five years later, the system is still not fully operational in the Commonwealth.
- Nearly 56% of youth committed to DYS first received services from the Department of Social Services (DSS).⁸⁰
- 78% of females committed to DYS first received services from DSS.⁸¹
- Almost 75% of juveniles committed to DYS were reported to have been placed on probation at least once prior to their commitment.⁸²

While local efforts are crucial to preventing youth violence, the responsibility for prevention and intervention should not fall solely to communities. Local efforts to prevent youth violence must be supported and enhanced at the state level, through the structure of state systems, the distribution of services, and the allocation of resources. The state should be a full partner in expanding local programs that have a proven track record in reducing violence.

Goals

- Ensure that juvenile offenders are held accountable for their actions swiftly and appropriately.
- Maximize early opportunities to intervene with at-risk children and families who are involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, to prevent future problems and conserve state resources.
- Ensure that services to children and families are delivered in a comprehensive fashion.

Recommendations for Action

The Juvenile Justice System

1. Take immediate action to achieve the statewide expansion of a full-time juvenile court system.
2. Ensure the imposition of immediate sanctions for all juvenile offenders, including first-time, nonviolent offenders.
3. Develop a strong system of intermediate sanctions, including intensive probation supervision for high-risk juvenile offenders.
4. Develop innovative approaches to strengthen accountability for juvenile offenders.

Executive Agencies

5. Restructure the state human service agencies to create a comprehensive service delivery system for children and families.
6. Continue to enhance intensive aftercare services for all DYS youth transitioning out of secure residential placements.
7. Expand the range and number of services available to female offenders committed to DYS.
8. Establish an Office of Data Collection, Evaluation, and Training.

The Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system plays a central role in intervening with juvenile offenders and responding to the aftermath of violence. Public safety is best served when each and every juvenile offense is met with an immediate, certain, and appropriate response. The juvenile court and correctional systems must therefore be poised to deal with delinquent offenders as soon as they are identified or adjudicated, and to do so in a manner that embraces both short-term and long-term public safety considerations. This requires two things:

1. A fully functional, fully operational juvenile court system; and
2. A strong system of graduated sanctions and dispositional options for young offenders, including adult incarceration when appropriate.

1. Take immediate action to achieve the statewide expansion of a full-time juvenile court system.

The Massachusetts Court Reform Act of 1992 created a full-time juvenile court system, and five years later, we are still waiting for it to be fully established in the Commonwealth. The Juvenile Court Department budget allocation of over \$20 million for the 1998 fiscal year is a much-needed boost toward creating a fully operational system. The Juvenile Court Department also estimates,

however, that it will require additional funding to lease appropriate court facilities, for capital improvements on existing courthouses, and to create new court facilities. Other needs include modernization of the court's antiquated computer and communications systems, and additional support staff.

Presently, full-time juvenile courts are operational in Barnstable, Boston, Bristol, Springfield, and Worcester, and 33 juvenile court judges have been appointed. But shortages of resources continue, and many of the new judges are still sitting by designation as District Court judges, hearing juvenile matters in a variety of locations during juvenile sessions of the district courts. According to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Honorable Herbert P. Wilkins, the lack of space is so severe that many juvenile court judges "are unable to work with dignity."⁸³

Our part-time system of juvenile justice seriously compromises public safety because there are so many juvenile cases and a scarce amount of time available to resolve them. In practice, this means that juvenile delinquency cases—many involving serious, violent offenses—are continued month after month without resolution. The bottom line is that juvenile offenders are not held immediately accountable for their actions, and are not receiving the sanctions and services offered in the juvenile justice system as promptly as they should be.

Equally important is the role of the juvenile court in adjudicating child welfare proceedings, particularly those involving abused or neglected children. These proceedings determine nothing less than the most central aspects of the child's existence—with whom the child will live on a daily basis; whom the child can depend on for love and support; and whether the child must break off attachments to birth parents—in essence, what kind of future that child will have. Delays in child welfare proceedings can have a devastating impact on a child's life, because the longer a child remains in foster care, the less likely it becomes that he or she will ever find a permanent home. The resulting "foster care drift" can only magnify the problems of children who have already been victims of abuse and neglect. At present, continuances in these cases are the rule rather than the exception. Trials are difficult to schedule, and are often drawn out over a period of weeks, months, or even years. Without full implementation of juvenile court reform, these cases will continue to linger.

In addition to expeditious implementation of the juvenile court, we recommend that the juvenile court:

- Continue to promote intensive, special, and ongoing training for all juvenile court personnel, including judges, court officers, and probation officers. The training efforts should canvas the full range of unique and complex issues pertaining to child welfare and juvenile delinquency matters, including issues related to the relevant laws and procedures in juvenile matters; child development; community resources; violence; substance abuse; health; racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity; and mental illness, mental retardation, and special needs.⁸⁴
- Continue to strengthen collaborative relationships with the state human service agencies, including the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Youth Services. The work of the juvenile court and the several human service agencies are

inexorably linked. The court and the agencies must be able to work in unison to protect and serve children, particularly children who have been abused and neglected, and who are in need of services. The court-based staff of social workers and professionals qualified to do specialized assessments should be augmented to permit a broader range of services (e.g., parent education programs) to court clients.

- Maximize parental involvement in juvenile delinquency cases. The juvenile court can help prevent crime by ensuring that parents and/or families are closely involved with a juvenile's sentence or program. Policies that promote parental involvement may also provide an opportunity to serve families in need of intervention. Another innovative concept is enhancing youth education about the juvenile justice system. In Malden District Court, Judge Paul J. Cavanaugh has established Teen Advisory Panels to help young people gain an understanding of the justice system. In this program, teenagers meet with the judge on a monthly basis to discuss fact patterns of typical cases, and give suggestions for sentences.
- Continue to examine reforms that will further expeditious resolutions in critical child welfare proceedings, such as Care and Protection cases (C&Ps) and proceedings to terminate parental rights. In recent years, the juvenile court has attempted to promote, through clear policies and procedures, the swift resolution of child welfare cases, such as C&Ps. Attention must remain focused on reforms to obtain speedy and appropriate resolutions in these cases, including consideration of:
 - ***Expediting the appellate process*** for these matters. Appeals from decisions in C&P and termination of parental rights cases are often a multi-year process, during which time permanent placement of the child is not possible. Attention must be given to clogs in the system that allow children to remain in limbo, without a permanent home, for unreasonable amounts of time. One helpful step would be to increase funding for stenographic services so that the transcripts of these court proceedings can be prepared more expeditiously.
 - ***Promote mediation in child welfare cases.*** Because the adversarial process is both slow and destructive, the Court should explore opportunities to promote a mediated solution in appropriate child welfare cases.

2. Ensure the imposition of immediate sanctions for all juvenile offenders, including first-time, nonviolent offenders.

The juvenile justice system must be able to provide a swift, sure, and appropriate response from the very first time a juvenile offends, to break an escalating pattern of criminal conduct. Various types of immediate sanctions, including juvenile diversion programs, community service and restitution programs, and teen courts/peer panels, have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing further delinquent conduct by first-time, nonviolent juvenile offenders.

In Massachusetts, several promising models of diversion exist, including a Juvenile Diversion Project in the city of Lawrence, operated by the Essex County District Attorney's Office.

This program, established in 1981, provides first-time, nonviolent offenders the opportunity to participate in appropriate counseling/education and community service projects in lieu of going through the traditional court process. However, many communities across the state still do not have formal programs to address this population of offenders. Communities should be examining the availability of appropriate sanctions for low level offenders, in cooperation with the local district attorney's office, police department, juvenile court department, and juvenile probation office. Failure to provide quality interventions to address these young offenders could be a major—and costly—missed opportunity to prevent violence.

Listed below are some practical pointers to look at in establishing immediate sanction programs:

- The response must be swift. There must be an evident and meaningful connection between the offender's actions and the consequences.
- Proper screening mechanisms must be in place to ensure that only appropriate cases are included in these programs.
- Using the family of the offender and the community, including the offender's peers, can be powerful tools.
- Teen Court is an increasingly popular method of diversion. Teen Courts create a peer judgment system for first-time and nonviolent youthful offenders. There are approximately 250 Teen Courts across the country in 30 states. In most Teen Courts, teen volunteers act as jury members, court clerks, bailiffs, and attorneys. Offenders receive sanctions from the jury, but the program also mandates that they and their parents receive counseling. Sanctions are diverse: curfews, monetary restitution, letters of apology, and community service are some examples of Teen Court sentences. Young offenders are usually required to serve as jury members in a different case, and the penalty for noncompliance with a Teen Court sentence is referral to a regular juvenile court for adjudication.

3. Develop a strong system of intermediate sanctions, including intensive probation supervision for high-risk juvenile offenders.

The success of a system of graduated sanctions depends largely upon the strength of each response at every point along the continuum. All too often in Massachusetts, DYS is treated as the only response for juvenile offenders, instead of the response of last resort. For reasons of public safety and fiscal responsibility (it costs more than \$60,000 per bed for secure treatment each year), this cannot be the norm. We must devote attention to building a strong system of intermediate sanctions for juvenile offenders.

The need to dedicate significant attention and resources to intermediate sanctions is demonstrated by this compelling fact: three of every four juveniles on the DYS caseload as of July 1, 1996, were reported to have been placed on probation at least once before their commitment.⁸⁵ Four percent of those juvenile offenders were placed on probation two or more times.⁸⁶

Intensive probation supervision, including the Operation Night Light program referenced earlier, places high levels of control and supervision on juvenile offenders. Since Operation Night Light was created in Dorchester in 1992, 15 additional courts have adopted this model, or similar approaches.⁸⁷ Every court must make intensive probation services for high-risk offenders a top priority.

4. Develop innovative approaches to strengthen accountability for juvenile offenders.

In many jurisdictions around the nation, efforts are underway to strengthen accountability of juvenile offenders by increasing the involvement of crime victims and the community. These efforts, based upon principles referred to as “restorative justice,” are a response to the fact that, typically, the juvenile justice system focuses exclusively on the offender—that is, the offender’s punishment and treatment needs.

Restorative justice programs shift the focus from an offender-driven system to one that balances the attention given to the offender, the victim, and the community. A primary goal of restorative justice is to develop juvenile sentences that increase offender accountability. Dispositions such as restitution and community service—not new ideas in juvenile justice—are reinvented as key components of many restorative justice programs. For example, judges often order restitution in juvenile cases, but because many young offenders cannot pay, the victim ultimately receives little compensation. Restorative justice programs go one step farther, by enrolling juvenile offenders in programs to ensure that they *do* earn money and repay their victims for the damage that they have caused. Through restorative justice programs, crime victims are more satisfied with the justice process; a greater sense of public safety, participation, and empowerment is fostered in the community; and offenders cannot easily escape their obligations.

Throughout the country, a growing number of criminal and juvenile justice systems are implementing major changes in how they operate based on the principles of restorative justice. Examples include the Reparative Probation Community Boards initiative in Vermont, and the Family Group Conferencing program by police in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, both of which are being evaluated or supported by the National Institute of Justice. In addition, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has created the Balanced and Restorative Justice Program, a model program that is being established in 20 sites around the country, including in the Juvenile Probation Department of the Quincy District Court.

Programs and dispositions furthering the principles of restorative justice are not right for every offender, and all programs should include a screening process to identify appropriate candidates. While there is still little information about the impact that these programs have had, or agreement on how they should be implemented, policymakers in Massachusetts should explore these initiatives further.

Executive Agencies

5. Restructure the state human service agencies to create a comprehensive service delivery system for children and families.

More than half of the youth committed to DYS were first involved with DSS.⁸⁸ A majority of female offenders (78%) committed to DYS received services from DSS prior to their commitments.⁸⁹ These findings support the nexus between children who are abused, neglected, or in need of services, and delinquent youth who offend later. It is easy to conclude that early opportunities to intervene with and serve these children were either missed or inadequate. The human service sector has a key role to play in violence prevention through early intervention with children and families, and therefore must act early, swiftly, and effectively.

For years, the human service delivery system has been characterized as fragmented and compartmentalized. Not surprisingly, such a splintered service delivery system leaves far too many opportunities for children and families to slip between the gaps that exist between agencies. Learning that one agency has backed off or terminated services to a client, because that client has separately come under the jurisdiction of another agency, is common. But, children and families typically have multiple service needs, and rarely do those needs fit neatly into the narrow parameters of a single agency's mandate.

These are not new observations. Even the current administration described the health and human services system as "disjointed" and a "sprawling bureaucracy."⁹⁰ Nevertheless, this disconnected service system remains, and continues to impede best efforts to promote a comprehensive response to violence prevention. Human Services should be restructured to be:

- ✓ Family-focused;
- ✓ Comprehensive and flexible;
- ✓ Community- and neighborhood-based, with decision-making authority at the local level;
- ✓ Emphasizing developmental and preventive services that support families earlier and seek to avert crises;
- ✓ Outcome focused;
- ✓ Equitable in allocation of services; and
- ✓ Adequately funded.

Aspects of the present human service delivery system, including the geographic distribution of services and the hours that services are available, impose significant barriers to realizing these principles. The most significant issue to contend with, however, may be the structure of human service financing, which does not allow for flexibility in the use of state-appropriated funds to meet the needs of families. The categorical nature of service funding, defined by many specialized services administered by the 14 separate agencies under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, is a major obstacle to coordinating human services delivery.

A number of other states, including Iowa, Texas, California, Maryland, Virginia, and Arkansas, have embarked upon efforts to integrate human service delivery. These states are at various stages of carrying out these efforts, such as decategorizing funding for services, integrating

agencies with common or overlapping missions, and increasing the flexibility in systems, to respond more effectively to the needs of clients. While the approach in each state differs, they share the overarching goal of improving the delivery of human services. These states provide promising examples of systems reform. Some of the strategies that have been implemented include:

- ✓ Enacting legislation to decategorize funding at the state or county level;
- ✓ Establishing interagency agreements;
- ✓ Promoting a large-scale overhaul of the structure and function of human services at the state and regional level;
- ✓ Integrating management information systems;
- ✓ Establishing common intake and eligibility criteria; and
- ✓ Performing system-wide planning and budgeting.

6. Continue to enhance intensive aftercare services for all DYS youth transitioning out of secure residential placements.

Aftercare, or programs such as outreach and tracking, intensive parole supervision, work training programs, and day reporting, play a vital role in helping young people who have been in residential/secure placements to stay out of crime. Aftercare for young offenders transitioning back into the community after residential placements cannot be merely an afterthought. Expanding the aftercare services for youth in DYS custody has been an issue of concern for a number of years, and one that DYS has attempted to address. Among the issues the agency should continue to examine in this area is the need to provide safe, independent transitional living situations for offenders for whom returning home is not a safe or otherwise viable option. The need for this type of living option will take new shape as the population of committed youth between the ages of 18 and 21 increases in response to recent changes in the law.⁹¹ For youth transitioning back into the community after the age of 18, foster care and other aftercare services will not generally be appropriate or available options. For example, aftercare programming that prepares and supports youth transitioning into work may become necessary.

7. Expand the range and number of services available to female offenders committed to DYS.

Youth violence is not just a male problem. Recent statistics indicate an alarming national trend among teenage girls: between 1986 and 1995, the rate of violent crime perpetrated by girls under the age of 18 increased 124 percent—more than twice the rate of increase seen in boys of the same age.⁹² Between 1989 and 1996, the number of females committed to DYS increased from 198 to 254.⁹³ Although young women comprise less than 10% of the total DYS population, they have unique program needs that often are not met. Many young women who enter the juvenile justice system require treatment and education around issues related to sexual abuse or substance abuse,⁹⁴ and could benefit from programming designed for female runaways and teenage mothers.

The gender-specific and developmental needs of young women must be addressed to intervene with female offenders effectively.⁹⁵ Currently, only eight programs in the Commonwealth serve the female population, and four of these are detention programs.⁹⁶ We must create a broader range of treatment options designed for female offenders.

8. Establish an Office of Data Collection, Evaluation, and Training.

Currently, there is a strong sense that law enforcement strategies, such as those that we have previously described, are making a difference in communities throughout the state. Certainly the declining crime rates go a long way in supporting this contention. However, without routine, formal evaluations of programs, it is difficult to define what is working and why it is effective. This information gap impedes the ability to replicate programs in other communities, secure funding for continuing or expanding programs, and identify necessary changes when programs do not achieve their mark. There must be a greater emphasis on evaluation and data collection at the state level to improve current practices and maintain support for criminal justice initiatives.

An Office of Data Collection, Evaluation, and Training should be established within an existing agency such as the Executive Office of Public Safety or the Department of Public Health, to enhance and document the effectiveness of Massachusetts criminal justice programs, agencies, and violence prevention initiatives. This office should develop and carry out a criminal justice research and evaluation program to collect, store, and analyze information; encourage uniform evaluation standards; strengthen the accountability of criminal justice agencies; and communicate information to all criminal justice agencies, public health agencies, and the public. The office should build partnerships with the multitudes of academic and nonprofit institutions working in the field of program evaluation. In addition, the office should provide training to criminal justice personnel to build institutional capacity for the implementation of data collection systems, as well as for the interpretation and application of data to strategic planning and management, public relations, and resource development.

Creating this type of office will place a greater emphasis on data collection and evaluation of programs at the state level. To help law enforcement identify, target, and monitor “hot spots,” an ideal data management system would have the ability to aggregate data from hospital surveillance systems (which can identify younger victims and victims who do not call the police), the WRISS system, and police data.

Benchmark for the Future

A comprehensive and coordinated approach to the development of criminal and juvenile justice policy at the state level.

A comprehensive and coordinated approach to the development of criminal and juvenile justice policy at the state level.

Currently, criminal justice and juvenile justice policy is established in a piecemeal, and often reactive, fashion. The state should create criminal and juvenile justice policy that furthers a

comprehensive vision—an agenda that spans the range of issues from primary prevention through the strictest forms of punishment.

Earlier sections of this report emphasize the need for communities to conduct an “assessment” to identify problems and needs, and set priorities for action to improve law enforcement, intervention, and crime prevention efforts. To improve our response to crime at all levels—state, county, and local—the state must engage in the same process. Ultimately, the establishment of a coordinated approach to crime reduction and prevention policy will help to support local innovations and will lead to proactive solutions.

Working Luncheons to Prevent Youth Violence

SPEAKERS

Geoffrey Canada
President and CEO
Rheedlen Centers for
Children and Families

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel, M.D., M.P.H.
Professor of Pediatrics
and Preventive Medicine
Northwestern University
School of Medicine
Attending Pediatrician
Children's Memorial Hospital

Ronald P. Corbett, Jr., Ed.D.
Deputy Commissioner
Field Services Division
Office of the Commissioner of Probation

Robert P. Gittens, Esq.†
First Assistant District Attorney
Office of the District Attorney
Suffolk County

The Honorable Leslie Harris
Associate Justice
Boston Juvenile Court

David Kennedy
Senior Researcher
Program in Criminal Justice
John F. Kennedy School of
Government
Harvard University

William O'Leary‡
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department
of Youth Services

Dean Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.
Florence Heller Graduate School
for Advanced Studies in
Social Welfare

Youth Panelists

† Mr. Gittens is currently Commissioner of the Department of Youth Services.

‡ Mr. O'Leary is currently Secretary of Health and Human Services.

SECTION SIX
Session Summaries

Session 1

**COMMUNITIES' ROLE IN PREVENTING
YOUTH VIOLENCE**

October 24, 1995

SESSION 1—October 24, 1995

COMMUNITIES' ROLE IN PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE

If you wonder how a fourteen-year-old can shoot another child his own age in the head, or how boys can do "drive-by shootings" and then go home to dinner, you need to know you don't get there in a day, or week, or month. It takes years of preparation to be willing to commit murder, to be willing to kill or die for a corner, a color, or a leather jacket. Many of the children of America are conditioned early to kill and, more frighteningly, to die for what to an outsider might seem a trivial cause . . . There are children who are hiding weapons in their closets . . . certain that they need their guns or knives for their own safety, sure that their very lives depend on having those weapons . . . [T]he impact and fear of violence has overrun the boundaries of our ghettos and has both its hands firmly around the neck of our whole country.

From: *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A personal history of violence in America*,
by Geoffrey Canada, Beacon Press, 1995

In his introductory remarks at the first Working Luncheon on Youth Violence Prevention, Attorney General Scott Harshbarger stated, "We all know that it is a small percentage of the overall youth population that engages in acts of violence, but they account for a very large amount of the violence itself. As much as we think we have focused effectively on hard core prosecutions, on trying to deal with the serious repeat offender in both the adult and juvenile systems, the fact is all of us are increasingly concerned about the availability of weapons in the community.

"We must have a police and prosecutorial and judicial response that treats guns and violence very seriously. If we focus solely on police and prosecution and punishment, we're not going to solve this problem. We are holding back the tide, unless we can find ways to get involved on many different levels, and to seek prevention and early intervention as key components of public safety and public protection. This is not just a nice idea of something we could do if we had the resources. Stopping the violence, preventing the victimization before it occurs, is a key component of public safety, and ultimately it's likely to be far more successful over time.

"But, we obviously have to do more if we are to save our children. We must develop strategies not only to keep kids from killing each other with guns, but on how to find ways to give them back hope. Part of the effort is to convince young people that there's a worthwhile and important place for each and every one of them in our society. We must give them hope and dreams and visions, to replace the nightmare and despair and hopelessness. And we must give them communities in which they can grow and develop and reach adulthood in safety."

That is the mission of Geoffrey Canada, the author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun*, and the featured speaker at the first session. As President and CEO of the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York, Mr. Canada has been instrumental in developing a number of important initiatives, including the Beacon Schools program, which uses public school buildings to provide inner-city families with safe havens and constructive activities 17 hours each day, 365 days each year.

Geoffrey Canada contrasted the issues young people face today with what life was like when he was growing up. "I grew up in the South Bronx. It was a tough neighborhood. There was plenty of violence around, but at the same time there were some really concrete rules that were governing a lot of this violence. And one of the things we began to notice was that the rules concerning violence had begun to change. If you grew up in a community like I did, violence typically started the same way, usually after school . . . But there were rules [about fighting]. You had to be the same age. You had to be the same size . . . The rules were very clear that there was a code that governed violence. I would dare say today, that if you travel to some communities, they'll shoot you if you get into a violent physical confrontation. And I can take you to some communities, where they'll shoot you if you get into a verbal confrontation. And I can take you to some communities, where they'll shoot you if you look at them wrong. And I'll take you to some places where nobody would know why you get shot.

"How can young people figure out how to deal with circumstances when all the rules have suddenly changed? When at one time you could figure out how to avoid certain kinds of behavior, now suddenly things have gone crazy. You can't figure that out when you're 13 or 14 years old, you can't figure that out if you can't move from one place to the other safely. So, it's clear that young people really are going to have a very difficult time responding intelligently and rationally to a situation where the rules have suddenly disintegrated."

Mr. Canada went on to describe how the easy availability of guns has contributed to the rise in youth violence. "Handguns have dramatically changed the relationship that children have with violence. When I was growing up, we learned very early that there were real consequences to violence and you found that you couldn't beat everybody. You couldn't win every fight, so you began to shut up. The thing that we used to do was 'self-check.' You put yourself in check, or you realize you could be running your mouth and get yourself punched in the nose out there. We began to really learn about limits and boundaries. There are some young people who've never run into a boundary that they don't think they can simply blast their way through if they have enough firepower. That is very heady stuff for a 13- or 14- or 15-year-old to have to deal with."

He also pointed to the fact that adults seem to be disappearing from children's lives. "There used to be a time when adults were very much in charge of their community . . . [W]hen I was growing up we had a woman who lived on our block, and the best we could figure out was, her only job was to look out the window and catch us and tell our mothers what we were doing . . . [H]er name was Mrs. Lipscomb. Mrs. Lipscomb didn't have any job. She'd just sit there and she'd tell your mother everything. You couldn't get away with anything. My mother worked, and she would come in and say, 'Geoff, why were you here at

1:30 in the afternoon?' And I'd say, 'I was in school.' She'd say, 'Well, Mrs. Lipscomb said . . . ' And I'd say, 'Oh, that Mrs. Lipscomb!' But it was someone looking out for us. We always had adults who would come up to us at any given time and ask what we were doing. 'What are you all standing here for?' 'We were just standing.' 'You all doing anything?' 'No, we're not doing anything.' 'Whose cigarette is that?' 'I don't know.' 'Come here, boy. Your mother know you smoke?' They'd just talk to you. They'd grab you by your arm and ask, 'Where do you live?' They would expect you to go to your mother and tell her if you were outside doing something improper.

"That's gone. Mrs. Lipscomb doesn't live here anymore. No one's really having a relationship with young people. When I was growing up, adults had the power, adults had the control. We, as young people, had to hide to do anything wrong, anything that an adult didn't approve of. It's a totally different world when you can do stuff right out in front and feel that adults are powerless to do anything about it. That's very . . . powerful stuff to believe that adults are actually afraid and intimidated by your behavior, and three or four of you can cower an adult and they're not going to come back with three or four of them to regain any sense of balance or power. And I know young people who are growing up thinking that they are the authority, they are the power in the community, because there are no adults present setting the kind of standards that young people need if they're going to grow up to learn and believe in the same kind of normative behavior that we believe in."

Mr. Canada also voiced his concerns about the way the handgun industry has targeted women and children. "Handguns just didn't come into the communities accidentally. There was a young woman from the Handgun Control Institute in Washington who talked about . . . the fact that the handgun industry had a slump in 1982. And they decided they were going to expand into new markets: women and children . . . The marketing was quite effective and it was done very much in the same way that cigarettes are marketed to young people. There were certain name changes for guns to make them more attractive. Certain stylized changes for guns to make them more effective. And our young people began to be attracted to the gun magazines and the other paraphernalia that the gun industry produced."

According to Mr. Canada, another factor contributing to the increase in violence was the rising number of young people drawn into selling drugs. "In the early to middle '70s, some laws were passed in New York which we thought were going to actually help us deal with crime. These laws required some mandatory minimum sentencing for a relatively small amount of narcotics, basically aimed at the heroin trade. These laws had unanticipated consequences. Young people who had never really been in the drug market . . . began to sell drugs. If they were caught, they would simply go into the juvenile—not the adult correction system. At that time, kids were involved in the periphery around drug sales, like steering people to an apartment on the third floor. Then something else happened which exacerbated this whole problem. Crack cocaine came into communities while young people were just really moving into [selling drugs]. It was a drug that many of the older drug dealers weren't really up to in terms of both its popularity and how quickly people got addicted to it. And young people began to corner that market and work there. At the same time, [opportunities for other] jobs were decreasing. For many young people, this was the only way that they could figure out to make some money."

These sociological changes have had a major impact on the health and well-being of children across the country. Mr. Canada drew parallels between the epidemic of violence and war. As he said, "The Children's Defense Fund reports that between 1979 and 1991 there were 50,000 children in America that were killed by handguns—more than all of the soldiers who would go off to the war in Vietnam. There is literally a war going on in the streets of our country. While we might identify pockets where this war is raging, it basically touches every part of our community and our society. There needs to be a coordinated and a scaled response to this war. This is not a small, singular incident . . . There's one child, one family, crying over one dead body. But if you could look at our community over the course of a month, you would see that scene repeated time after time, after time, after time, and you would understand that it is really warfare. This isn't bad luck, bad timing, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This has been children growing up under wartime conditions."

He also noted the influence of alcohol and other drugs in exacerbating the problem. "In some communities, alcohol is sold by 40 ounces, and malt liquor is the alcohol that's really pushed in minority communities. And the 40 ounces are sold as a one-serving size. It's not like there are 40 ounces and everybody gets cups and let's share. This is your personal 40 ounces. Malt liquor is more powerful than regular beer. And, children aren't smoking marijuana cigarettes the way some people remember them as little tiny things that were called joints. Removing tobacco from cigar paper and re-wrapping them with marijuana has become the norm in many of our communities.

"Now, I don't know about you, but I have enough trouble with adolescents just in general. These normal, straight, sober adolescents. They're a handful. And we have all these kids running around with handguns who are teenagers. I used to worry about my son with the lawn mower. When he was 15, he used the lawn mower and I used to think 'Didn't you see that rock there? What were you thinking about?' Who knows what they're thinking about? They're distracted. They have other things on their mind. They're really not focused on the here and now. And now I think about a kid with a handgun. Maybe he's a reasonable child. He's not really intending anything with this handgun. You pull out 40 ounces of malt liquor, have him smoke a [big] marijuana cigarette, and then you ask me if that child is going to have any ability to make rational and reasonable decisions."

Mr. Canada urged the luncheon participants to engage the community in responding to youth violence. He noted that young people need safe places to go—particularly after school—and activities to keep them occupied and out of trouble. He pointed out that young people need structure, and a sense of belonging. He gave a personal example of the importance of feeling that somebody needs you. "My grandmother needed me . . . my grandmother couldn't do certain things and she would constantly say, 'Oh, you're such a strong boy. You can lift that up for Grandma.' It made me feel like, 'Yeah, I can do that. That's easy, Grandma. Get me something else to do.' And then she'd give me a lot of other things to do because she was smarter than I thought. But I actually felt needed as a young person."

He listed the essential elements of youth programs that were adopted from social analyst Lisbeth Schorr. Programs should be geographically and psychologically accessible— young people should feel a connection to the program or place. There should be minimal barriers to participation, so that youth are encouraged to join. Programs should be comprehensive, not piecemeal. Mr. Canada noted that programs must be responsive to what *young people* need, not what adults need. He cautioned the luncheon participants: “Remember we adults have needs too, like quiet. Children have a need for loudness. We want orderly and straight lines, and young people want to have what we would consider chaos . . . we have to make sure we balance our needs with their needs.” Successful programs are centered around the family, are responsive to the community, and have clearly defined goals.

In response to the question of where did the “Mrs. Lipscombs” go, Mr. Canada cited the rise in the number of women entering the workplace and no longer being home to monitor children’s activities. He also noted that many people withdraw from their community out of fear, or they feel that violence isn’t their problem, and that there is nothing they can do about it.

One luncheon participant noted the urgent need for prevention and early intervention efforts, given the grim warnings of demographers and criminal justice researchers who predict a large increase in the number of youth at risk for violence by the year 2010. However, policymakers frequently focus intervention efforts at the more obvious targets— older youth who are already violent and dangerous—rather than working with 6- to 8-year-olds, for example, who, without appropriate interventions are likely to become future offenders. Another participant noted how community outreach workers, streetworkers, and other individuals who work closely with at-risk youth are taking the place of all the “Mrs. Lipscombs” who have disappeared.

Mr. Canada believes, “We have so many handguns out there just in children’s hands that we have to give a different message to young people about safety first, and then get rid of those handguns second. Because they’re not going to give them up as long as they think there’s a war going on.”

Another participant pointed out that young people often feel that the only way they get attention—from the media and others—is from negative behavior. She told the group, “I talk with any number of kids who have said, ‘You know, if I get all A’s, nobody knows it. All I need is one kid to have a fight with another kid in my school, and everybody in the world thinks that my entire neighborhood is a disaster area.’”

The participants noted that because results of prevention and intervention efforts are seldom immediately visible, it is necessary to maintain a long-term perspective on changing social norms around violence and guns. Mr. Canada pointed to efforts in the African-American community to change social norms around fathers’ involvement in their children’s lives. The organization Save the Children has been working on training African-American leaders in the community, developing high-quality programming in education and social services, promoting an active role for churches, and encouraging a sense of community.

Mr. Canada noted that most children learn about violence for the first time at home, from witnessing domestic abuse and experiencing firsthand child abuse and neglect. He said that many parents who beat their children as discipline want to do a better job at parenting, and obviously would benefit from learning other techniques to deal with behavior problems. Therefore, prevention and early intervention efforts with families are of utmost importance.

Session 2

**YOUTH GUN USE:
NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

January 11, 1996

SESSION 2—January 11, 1996

YOUTH GUN USE: NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

According to a 1996 national report on juvenile offenders and victims, the number of juveniles who killed with a gun quadrupled.⁹⁷ In 1994, 80% of juveniles who killed used a gun, compared to 50% in 1980.⁹⁸

These statistics should come as no surprise in a nation where obtaining a license to buy and sell firearms is inexpensive, easy, and subject to little scrutiny. There are hundreds of thousands of federally licensed firearm dealers in the United States today. Many of these dealers operate out of their homes and garages, and are therefore difficult to monitor. Guns move all too easily from licensed dealers to unscrupulous gun runners to illegal underground markets in the inner city.

The problem of handguns and youth was the topic of the second Working Luncheon on Youth Violence Prevention. The first speaker was Katherine Kaufer Christoffel, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Preventive Medicine at Northwestern University, Director of the Children's Memorial Medical Center's Violent Injury Prevention Center in Chicago, and the founder of the Handgun Epidemic Lowering Plan (HELP) Network of Concerned Professionals. The second speaker was David Kennedy, Senior Researcher for the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

In her presentation, Dr. Christoffel presented data on child and adolescent firearm fatalities in the United States. She noted that the problem has become so extreme that, for teenagers, there are more firearm deaths than all natural deaths combined. The problem in the U.S. is the worst among industrialized nations with an overall homicide rate (all races combined) of 17 per 100,000. Next highest is Italy, with a rate of about 4 per 100,000. In comparison, Japan's rate is about 0.1 per 100,000. Dr. Christoffel pointed out that the situation in the U.S. is even worse when considering the homicide rate among African-Americans—at almost 160 per 100,000. “This is a portrait of an epidemic that is out of control,” she said, “as surely as if the [statistics referred to] heart disease or AIDS or cancer . . . Our kids deserve to expect a death rate from [homicide] in the ballpark of their peers in the rest of the world.”

Dr. Christoffel went on to note that the impact of handguns is far-reaching. “But [juvenile firearm deaths alone] don't begin to capture the full effect of this on our kids,” she said. “If we look at *all* the firearm deaths in 1992, which are still the latest nationwide numbers that I've been able to get [in January 1996], there were about 38,000; about 33,000 of those were adults. And each of them had children, nieces, nephews, cousins, neighbors, students, patients, etc., who were directly affected by these deaths. And then there are the non-fatal firearm injuries. Just last year we got the first reasonably accurate estimate of these, which is about 130,000, of which about 59,000 were hospitalized. And they all have little kids who are touched by these experiences.” Dr. Christoffel also noted the economic

costs related to firearms, citing one estimate of \$1.4 billion for health care costs from firearm injuries each year.

Dr. Christoffel urged the luncheon participants to view firearm injuries from a public health perspective, and not solely as a criminal justice problem. Describing the public health approach, she said, “Public health has a very different orientation. We deal with health compromised; our intervention modality is primarily prevention; our focus is on the environment that encourages misuse of the gun; and we take a population approach, rather than trying to isolate the individuals who actually are misusing. These are complementary approaches, and if we look at it this way, we can add another discipline to address the problem, and certainly there is enough of a problem to go around.

“When we add a public health perspective, several things happen. Science is used for prevention as well as treatment; policy flows from science rather than from rhetoric or posturing; we protect the many at risk, not just those who are hurt—and we all know that oftentimes it is serendipity that determines who it is that gets hurt. And we have measurable outcomes to gauge our success that are different from those of criminal justice.”

Dr. Christoffel cited research data that links gun ownership with increased rates of suicide and homicide by guns—particularly handguns. One well-known study conducted in 1988 compared homicide death rates in two demographically similar cities: Seattle, where access to handguns is very easy, and Vancouver, where access is very difficult. The study found that the homicide rate in Seattle was almost twice as high as Vancouver. Almost all of this difference is due to firearms—handguns in particular.

Dr. Christoffel offered further sobering statistics about handguns in the United States, citing that “the U.S. home arsenal contains about 200 million firearms, perhaps a bit more, and of those, somewhere between one-quarter and one-third are handguns.” The potential for danger is exacerbated by the fact that many of those handgun owners want the weapons for self-protection, and therefore keep the guns loaded and unlocked, which, as Dr. Christoffel stated, “means they want them handy when ‘stranger danger’ shows up. But the problem, of course, is that ‘stranger danger’ doesn’t drop by very often, while the family is there every day. The result is that normal everyday interactions are turned lethal by the presence of the handy handgun.”

To stem the tide of the epidemic, Dr. Christoffel recommended that efforts must be directed at the source of handguns, starting with the manufacturers and importers. “There are only about 2,000 of them,” she said. “They face very few regulations and monitoring. Their costs, in terms of the deadly consequences of their product, are near zero. Their liability has not been addressed very much at all—in contrast to car manufacturers, for example—but there is a lot that can be done.

“The 2,000 distributors sell to the 100,000 or more retailers, the federal firearm licensees (FFLs),” she continued. “Those have come down in number since the Brady bill—there used to be more of these than McDonalds; now there are a few less. They don’t have to sell at stores, so your neighbor may be one and you may not know it. It’s a remarkably

unregulated retail industry, and it's interesting to wonder why on earth that should be allowed. The industry advertises, often unethically. An ad in *Ladies Home Journal* basically says 'Be a good mother, get a handgun, protect your child,' even though the advertisers know—because we know—that a handgun in the home is actually dangerous."

Dr. Christoffel outlined the goals of the HELP Network, an "organization of organizations" that is dedicated to addressing gun injuries as a public health problem. "We want to change the debate from one that focuses on the Second Amendment and crime, to one that focuses on the health endpoints of this epidemic," she said. "Hope that this will help is based on our experience with cigarettes and traffic safety. We've halved the rate of adult smoking in a generation since it was defined as a public health problem, and we've steadily reduced motor vehicle deaths, while deaths from firearms have continued to rise. What we've done to motor vehicle injuries followed changes in thinking that began to view it as a health problem. It's time we did that with firearms as well.

"The steps involved in the public health approach include tracking the epidemic; widening circles of handgun-free zones—starting from homes and eventually spreading to the nation; working on prevention strategies that consider both the demand end and the supply end; and targeting specific myths, [like] about the Second Amendment. I think that our policy goal as a nation must be to recognize that we cannot hold our babies in one hand and our handguns in the other. We have to make a choice. We can't protect them both. And once that's clear, I think that the national consensus will be to choose to protect the children, not the guns."

As primary investigator for the Boston Gun Project, David Kennedy, the second speaker, has studied ways to reduce youth gun violence by disrupting the illicit market in firearms, and by deterring violent behavior by chronic offenders. The project is designed to analyze Boston's youth gun problem and develop an intervention, and is a collaboration between the Boston Police Department; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; Suffolk County District Attorney's Office; the Attorney General's Office; the U.S. Attorney's Office; and the Massachusetts Departments of Probation, Parole, and Youth Services.

Mr. Kennedy described how he set out to address the problem of youth gun use. He noted that since young people in Boston obtain guns illegally, legal remedies like the Brady law would not be likely to have a large impact on the problem. Having just completed successful work on disrupting street narcotics markets, he then considered ways in which to apply that same approach to another illicit market—guns in the hands of youth.

Mr. Kennedy and his colleagues researched the problem first by talking to young people on the street about why they owned or used guns. The researchers discovered the most common reason the youths gave was self-defense.

"Now this is a different story than the one we usually tell ourselves," Mr. Kennedy explained. "The usual story about the youth homicide problem in the inner city is that crack came to town, crack brought guns to town, kids started shooting each other . . . It seems indubitable that drugs started [the problem]—this [rise in youth homicide] all coincided with

the beginning of crack markets. It doesn't seem so clear at this point, however, in 1996 . . . that it's still being driven by drugs. And we have the idea—and it's been borne out by the ethnography we've been dealing with—that a lot of what's driving current gun acquisition is the fact that there is such a high level of violence out there, much of it gun violence, that kids who wouldn't ordinarily be arming themselves are doing so. My sense is that this level of violence is also leading to gang formation. The usual story we tell ourselves, as we look back over the last ten years and see the increase in gangs and gang violence, is that gangs are the cause and violence is the effect. I think it's reasonable to believe, in some cities at any rate, that it is in fact backwards. That it's the violence that leads to gang formation, and that kids feel they need protection. Protection can be weapons, it can be somebody to watch your back, it can be—in the case of many kids I've talked to—simply removing yourself from social life. I talk to a lot of kids who just don't go out, don't have friends, don't feel safe being out there. But if you're going to be out, you need some help, or at least a lot of kids feel that way."

Decreasing the availability of guns would not only reduce gun deaths and injuries, the researchers reasoned, but would help decrease the fear among young people, leading fewer of them to want guns in the first place. Therefore, determining exactly how young people obtain guns in Massachusetts was a major focus of the Boston Gun Project.

Where do kids get guns in the Commonwealth? "One of the things everybody 'knew' was that all of the guns were coming to Massachusetts from down South," Mr. Kennedy related. "Not true. The only source of guns taken away from kids in this state that reaches into double digits on a percentage basis is Massachusetts. A third of the guns we take away from 21-year-olds and under in the city of Boston come from Massachusetts. All southern states combined add up to about another third."

What kinds of guns are young people buying? "Kids are buying disproportionately new guns," Mr. Kennedy told the luncheon participants. "The kids [told us], 'We want guns that are new in the box' . . . What the kids want are the kinds of guns they see in the movies . . . semi-automatic pistols, not revolvers. There is [also] street wisdom that says that if you've got a bargain gun—and a burgled gun is going to be a cheap gun—then it's probably got a body on it, and you don't want to get caught with somebody else's crime gun."

Fortunately, these consumer preferences make it easier to trace guns to their first retail sale and pinpoint illegal markets. Mr. Kennedy cited a study that indicated that approximately 90% of crime guns in the U.S. can be traced to less than 4% of the universe of federal firearms licensees. "In other words," noted Mr. Kennedy, "almost none of the federal firearms licensees are feeding guns to criminals. A very, very small proportion of federal firearm licensees are either scofflaws or are being used by scofflaw purchasers and then diverting guns to criminal use . . . Those 4% are prime candidates for enforcement attention, and differential regulatory supervision.

"All of this is to say," he concluded optimistically, "we're all familiar or becoming familiar with these statistics that were presented about the epidemic, about the number of guns, about the unmanageability of the huge stockpile of weapons held in civilian hands.

[But] it's not in fact all that bad. It's bad—no argument. But [we can] look at particular kinds of crimes, look at kids, and look at the guns kids use. [When we] look not at this whole universe of people selling guns, but at the ones who seem connected with misbehavior, there are ways to trim the universe down to a point where we can find nodes that we can actually work on."

He also cited evidence that the universe of violent and dangerous youth can be approached in the same way. "Most of the youth who are involved in violence are serial criminal offenders who are well-known to the authorities and more or less gang-involved," said Mr. Kennedy. Efforts to crack down on youth violence through comprehensive attention to all fronts of offenders' misbehavior have shown promise. When gang members know that violence will bring, for example, street drug enforcement and strict probation supervision, many will respond. And messages about such new enforcement regimes can in fact be delivered. "It turns out that the street officers and probation officers know [the kids] to talk to . . . [I]f they are dealing with one particular group of kids, there's going to be somebody on parole, there's going to be somebody on probation. If you want to tell them that the rules have changed with respect to gun use, you can bring them in and you can tell them. They will tell their friends. It's a subculture and you can communicate with them. I think what will work will be a package of all those things [affecting] supply and demand."

Attorney General Harshbarger cited the importance of interagency collaboration to address juvenile handgun use and juvenile crime, and highlighted the impact of such programs as the Community-Based Juvenile Justice Projects and the Safe Neighborhood Initiative. Advocating school-based conflict resolution programs, he said, "We're finding that once the kids have the tools to resolve conflicts without violence, that tends to lower the fear and concern . . . and leads to a sense of safety."

One luncheon participant remarked that there has been a reduction in violence due to information sharing between local law enforcement agencies, such as the Department of Probation and the Police Department. Issues of confidentiality have traditionally been a barrier to the more widespread sharing of information, as are the lack of ways to link data from one agency to another, and the fact that many areas in the country do not yet have sophisticated weapon-related injury surveillance systems.

Another participant commented how health and mental health providers, as well as police, can identify high-risk families who may benefit from services. Dr. Christoffel suggested that families experiencing domestic violence may be particularly targeted for intervention. She would also like to educate mothers to teach handgun avoidance as part of effective parenting. Another approach she suggested is to work with young people who have already been injured to try to reduce re-injury and perpetration by helping them heal emotionally.

Regarding the gun debate in this country, Mr. Kennedy pointed out that, "Most gun owners, when asked 'Do you support Brady? Do you support fewer FFLs? Do you support registration? Do you support transfers only through federal licensees? Do you support the assault weapon ban?'—they say yes. So the very large middle of those responsible non-gun

owners and responsible gun owners agree on the larger part of the gun-injury reduction agenda. They are not, however, represented by the people who speak for gun owners.

“The reason they’re not represented by [them] is because what gun owners hear out of conversations like this is, ‘We want to take your guns away.’ And in fact, that’s generally the correct message for them to get. So it may be that a key to addressing gun violence is to respect the values of mainstream gun owners, and enlist them in support of a workable centrist agenda, rather than scaring them into reflexive opposition to all gun-related measures.”

Session 3

A COORDINATED RESPONSE

October 16, 1996

SESSION 3—October 16, 1996

A COORDINATED RESPONSE

Research has shown that a small percentage of youth is responsible for the vast majority of violent juvenile crime in the United States. A 1996 report of the Boston Gun Project described youth homicide in Boston as highly concentrated among serially offending youth with gang connections. The Project's research suggests that the problem of youth homicide in Boston is concentrated among approximately 1,300 young people, who account for less than one percent of the total youth population aged 14 to 24. Furthermore, most young people who are involved in lethal violence—as victims or perpetrators—are already known to law enforcement for prior offenses.

These findings suggest that approaches targeting these youth may be more effective than broad-based initiatives, and have implications for a comprehensive strategy that includes interagency collaborations, gang conflict resolution programs, after-school activities, community policing, and priority prosecution.

The third Working Luncheon on Youth Violence Prevention explored these issues. The speakers were Robert Gittens, First Assistant District Attorney for Suffolk County, and President, Boston School Committee; Ronald P. Corbett, Jr., Ed.D., Deputy Commissioner, Field Services Division, Massachusetts Department of Probation; and William O'Leary, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS). [As of the date of this report, Mr. Gittens is Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services and Mr. O'Leary is Secretary of Health and Human Services.]

Attorney General Scott Harshbarger introduced the session by citing the passage of new legislation regarding juvenile justice. "Sixteen days ago," he said, "we began in Massachusetts probably the most significant restructuring of the juvenile justice system in the last few decades with the new law that became effective on October 1 [1996], providing for automatic transfer of juveniles accused of murder to adult court for trial and sentencing; the elimination of trial *de novo* from the juvenile justice system; and the establishment of 'Trial First,' a new system replacing the juvenile transfer process that allows the Juvenile Court to sentence youthful offenders indicted by the Commonwealth to an extended DYS commitment or to an adult sentence. The law sends a strong message from the legislature on how we should handle serious juvenile offenders in terms of prosecution and punishment. And there's no doubt that these changes will have a strong impact on all the players in the juvenile justice system. So we are witnessing the dawning of a new era for juvenile justice in the Commonwealth. The question will be, even though it's new, aren't some of the answers old and isn't it time to remind ourselves that we don't need to re-invent the wheel? We do need to keep focused on what we can do and what we have learned as we go into this new era, and build on that foundation."

The first speaker, Mr. Gittens, acknowledged that the new legislation gives "significantly more authority and power to prosecutors in the handling of juvenile crime."

However, he added, "What many of us have long recognized is that if we're going to make an effort to stem the tide of juvenile violence, and if we're going to make an impact, then we've got to do something more. It can't simply be focused on the prosecution of juveniles."

Mr. Gittens attributed the recent decline in shootings, stabbings, and incidents of gang-related violence in Boston to community-based juvenile justice models, noting that they provide ways in which agencies and the community can work together constructively to address the problem of violence in the city. He cited several examples of community-based programs, including Dorchester's Safe Neighborhoods Initiative. As he explained, "There are a number of cases where we've worked together, when there was a flare-up of gang violence, to bring all of the law enforcement agencies and community groups together, and to reach out to those kids and say we're all working together to make sure that the violence stops . . . what we've discovered is that we've got to make ongoing linkages with other community-based agencies and social service agencies."

Mr. Gittens noted that the concept of community-based juvenile justice in Massachusetts originated when Attorney General Harshbarger was the District Attorney of Middlesex County. Since then, the model has been adopted by the Legislature and six district attorneys' offices in the Commonwealth have been funded to develop such programs in partnership with police, schools, and the Departments of Social Services, Probation, and Youth Services. The aim is to have all the partners focus on the most serious violent offenders.

In addition, these partnerships include round table discussions that promote the sharing of information about offenders and how problems might be addressed. The opportunity for interaction between key players is invaluable, Mr. Gittens stated. "What comes out of those discussions is the sharing of information about what's happening with particular kids. It's an amazing discussion because the police will say an individual was arrested over the weekend. The school will suddenly realize that that kid hasn't been in school for the past three weeks. We try our best to comply with all of the laws around confidentiality, and a lot of times it's the things that are unspoken in those meetings that can make a difference. The Department of Social Services has very strict requirements on what they can divulge about what's happening with a particular family. So a social worker may sit in that meeting and may say nothing about what they know about a particular family. But they may get some information that allows them to go back and say, 'Here's a family that needs some additional attention. There's something going on here that may have slipped past us.' The same thing happens when we share information with the Department of Youth Services. It's the opportunity for people to get that information, reach out, and pay special attention to that kid before he or she gets into additional trouble . . . kids begin to realize that people are talking . . . and they modify their behavior accordingly."

Mr. Gittens noted that the collaborative approach has been used to address the problem of truancy. A member of the Boston Police Department initiated an effort with fellow officers to reach out to young people who are on the street during school hours. He talks to them, helps get them to school, or notifies the school that these young people are on the street.

In closing, Mr. Gittens said, "I think we make two false assumptions about kids. We assume that they know a lot about what's going on, but they don't. They have to be brought into the equation . . . I think the other false assumption is if we give them good information that they won't respond adequately. I think that if we send a message that we are going to help them, that we are going to focus on reducing violence, they will respond to that."

Following Mr. Gittens remarks, Dr. Corbett explained Probation's approach to violence prevention. "Those of us in community corrections recognize that when we deal with young violent offenders, we really need to look at a two-pronged strategy," he said. "One certainly is prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation . . . and we take our lead from that. But the second part of that strategy . . . can be done through supervision, surveillance, and, certainly, a degree of fair and just control and deterrence. I think Probation has recognized, particularly in the last few years, that we need to give more attention to that side of the equation."

"I also want to emphasize very strongly that we understand, and we've learned time and time again with offenders under our supervision, that unless we are doing a credible job on both sides of that equation, we will fail. No side of that equation—deterrence, supervision, surveillance, treatment services, and intervention—will work by itself with our population. It's impossible. What we've been concentrating on over the last few years is how to get an aggressive, appropriate supervision strategy that's fair and just and consistent with our mission."

Dr. Corbett noted that the profile of juveniles that come under Probation's supervision has worsened over the last five years, indicating a need to develop new approaches. "[W]e've seen a 50% increase in the number of young people that we have to put into a maximum supervision category because all of the key indicators in their lives have deteriorated dramatically just in the last five years," he noted. "An example would be that the degree of substance abuse is much worse today than it was five years ago. And that, I think, is a reinforcer for us to try to develop humane but serious supervision strategies that take us out of our traditional model."

Dr. Corbett showed a videotape of Operation Night Light, acknowledging the work of Boston Police Commissioner Paul Evans and members of the Youth Violence Strike Force in launching and supporting the project. Operation Night Light was implemented in Boston in 1992. It is a collaborative effort in which probation officers and police officers make unannounced visits to probationers at home after their curfews. This initiative has resulted in an increase in compliance with conditions of probation, and almost a 10% decrease in new arrests of probationers.

Commissioner William O'Leary commented about one of the collaborative approaches that DYS has taken to track youth when they re-enter the community. He noted that in the 1960s and 1970s, juvenile justice in many parts of the country took the form of short periods of institutionalization, followed by discharge without supervision or aftercare program services. In the late '70s and '80s, he noted, Massachusetts was ahead of the rest of the country, in that it viewed juvenile justice as more of a continuum that might require

secure residential placement, group care, or other varieties of institutionalization as youth are tracked back into the community. However, the question of how to integrate the movement of young offenders from one setting to another was not dealt with. Confronted with an increasingly violent population and budget constraints, DYS came under scrutiny regarding its capacity to respond to juvenile crime. "Literally, we'd lost touch within the juvenile justice system," Commissioner O'Leary explained. "We weren't necessarily talking to the district attorneys or the courts, and we certainly weren't talking to mental health or other service providers . . . In addition, we had budget issues and then we had dramatic population growth. Youth were involved in more serious and violent offenses. As a result, kids who would have originally received probation ended up—because of risk, need, and the seriousness of the offense—coming into DYS.

"In addition, agencies such as ours weren't even organized in a way to serve the youth in a coordinated fashion. We might have a kid who we were holding pre-trial, located in Westfield, who would then be committed to a secure program in Worcester, who would then be put in a program on Cape Cod. There was no continuity of services or links to the home community."

In response to this fragmented situation, DYS created a more comprehensive approach to dealing with its population with an emphasis on sharing information. As Commissioner O'Leary explained, "We had to have a continuous focus on the population. What's their risk? What's their service need? For instance, if the kid was being held on bail, we were not aware of prior services. Had he been at a community mental health center? Is he on anti-psychotic medication? We had reason, but no ability to get that information. In addition, until a year ago, we didn't have access to Criminal Offender Record Information [CORI]. We could have a 17-year-old in our custody, who had an arrest for armed robbery, charged as an adult, and we would have no access to that information. As a result, we made placement decisions unaware of the pending charges." The current model links DYS with courts, probation, district attorneys, police, schools, education, community service programming, and intensive family intervention in an effort to share information and know what's going on with a young person and his or her family.

DYS created an assessment unit for each of the regions in the state, to look at every young person's health, service, and safety risks before making decisions on where the youth would be placed. In addition, it created a secure pre-trial unit to separate young people charged with lesser offenses from those being held on more serious offenses.

As Commissioner O'Leary explained, "In Western Massachusetts, we've developed what is called a juvenile justice network, which is tied directly to District Attorney Bennett's office. Through his community-based justice program, there are discussions about the highest-risk kids around issues related to education, social service, DYS, and the court. In effect, it involves case conferencing regularly, so that we can deal with issues like how we can keep them in school, do we have to get them into an alternative education program, etc. Much of this comes out of early discussions with the Attorney General on education reform. We put in place an Education Coordinator to work with the justice system around kids in our system who are tied up in the courts. We put together a community service restitution piece.

We've implemented a restorative justice piece for both Probation and DYS so that we can have kids doing community service. We're also designing a compatibility of our risk instruments with those of Probation, so that we can assist Probation in expanding different types of community supervision.

"The interface of health services, justice, and courts is suddenly contingent upon sharing information with systems that haven't done it in the past," Commissioner O'Leary concluded. "There are legal implications to that. That, I see, is one of the biggest challenges for all of us in the next couple of years. My personal view is we should opt towards sharing information and getting the services as local as possible."

Dr. Corbett described three key indicators of the population served by the Department of Probation that have plummeted over the last five years: (1) the history of perpetrating violence increased by 50%; (2) school discipline problems (i.e., suspensions) increased from approximately 67% to over 80%; and substance abuse rose from 35% to 56%. Dr. Corbett explained, "You're talking about kids who are much less well put together, and who have had much less benefit of formative child-rearing, so behaviorally they just don't have any of the inner constraints that you hope for when you're working with them . . . so the external constraints have to increase, at least for a while."

Commissioner O'Leary confirmed that his agency has seen similar changes in the young people it serves. Not only have the total number of youth served changed, but the percentage of young people with person or violent offenses has increased, from 25% of the total to more than 50%. In addition, between 70% and 80% of the young people come from single-parent homes, usually headed by females.

Attorney General Harshbarger noted that aftercare problems are inevitable if there is no community-based system of juvenile justice to tie kids back into their communities.

The speakers and luncheon participants agreed that there is a statutory impediment to sharing information between agencies that often prevents appropriate intervention work. As Mr. Gittens stated, "If we're talking about integration, there has to be an effort made to integrate the knowledge and working mechanisms of what we're doing day to day so that we can share information." This has particular implications for how to intervene early on. "[For] the kids who are just beginning to demonstrate and act out," he noted, "there's almost no understanding of where people can go [for help]. If you talk to teachers, we've had elementary school principals come to us and say, 'Do something for us, because I've got this kid who's hitting other kids.' These aren't kids that are going to be prosecuted today. But those teachers don't know what to do with those kids today to get them help and they'll tell you if we don't do it now, you're going to be prosecuting them later."

Dr. Jay Winsten suggested that empowering young people, giving them a voice in shaping what's happening to their lives, is an important strategy. Commissioner O'Leary cited two demonstration programs in the state that are co-funded by DYS and Americorp in which students are involved in a number of different educational approaches and violence prevention initiatives, including family mediation.

One participant encouraged the business community to become more involved with efforts to keep young people out of trouble. He told the group, "One of the things that the Boston Police and the streetworkers are telling me is that we've got kids coming out of the woodwork saying, 'We want an alternative. Services are great. We love to meet with our probation officer, we love to meet with our DSS social worker, but you know what we really want? We want a job.' We have to do a better job of bringing the business community along so that there is a tie in . . . [between] law enforcement, social services, and jobs."

Another participant lamented that while we know what works—like after-school programs—frustration builds when successful initiatives are implemented and then are forced to close after several years when funding runs out. Decategorized funding and interagency collaborations were mentioned as possible solutions to funding shortages, allowing agencies to share and maximize available resources.

Commissioner O'Leary noted, "We can't wait for decategorical funding to occur. You're going to have to get the models in place to drive that change. I think one of the reasons you're seeing collaboration of law enforcement is they had no option but to do that. It's not simply a budget question. At our agency, one of the reasons we need to connect with law enforcement, schools, probation, and health providers is because we don't have enough staff to see the kids 24 hours a day. Police, teachers, probation officers, and human service staff are part of these kids' lives. We need to connect these pieces and share information to provide support for these young people."

Session 4

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

February 12, 1997

SESSION 4—February 12, 1997

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The interagency, collaborative efforts in law enforcement highlighted during the third Working Luncheon demonstrate that law enforcement agencies have developed new models for enhancing the criminal justice response to youth violence. Yet, by the time law enforcement becomes involved, it is too late; too many lives have been irreparably harmed by violence. Clearly, there must also be a focus on strengthening early intervention efforts with children and youth who are at risk of engaging in violent conduct, to prevent the violence from erupting in the first place.

The fourth Working Luncheon on Youth Violence Prevention examined whether: (1) early intervention could prevent at-risk children from becoming the victims or perpetrators of violence; (2) how to determine which young people are in need of services; and (3) what steps should be taken once they have been identified. The program featured two distinguished speakers: Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., Dean of the Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare at Brandeis University, and Judge Leslie Harris of the Boston Juvenile Court.

In his welcoming remarks, Dr. Jay Winsten noted the 15% decline in youth homicides nationally, and the even more striking success rate recently observed in the Greater Boston area, but urged the participants not to lessen prevention efforts. "When youth homicides begin to go down," he stated, "public attention turns elsewhere. The challenge now, as we've begun to see a dip in youth homicides, is to pour on resources, focus attention, and add momentum to changes that are already on the way. We are now perfectly positioned to achieve something of value that can be sustained for the long haul."

Attorney General Scott Harshbarger noted that the dramatic reduction in crime in Boston and in Massachusetts did not happen by accident. "It was a result of a concerted strategy, and more importantly, a collaboration of partnership, involving many people, many of whom are in this room, and you are to be congratulated," he said. "This is a very real success, but we now have an opportunity . . . to get at the root causes of violence, in order to use prevention *before* the blood is spilled, as a way to really make a difference over time . . . We must not ignore the impact of crime in the community and abuse and neglect on children. We must recognize the impact of breakdowns in familial structure, the holes that exist in the 'safety nets' at various levels, and the need to target communities that are especially impacted in these areas . . . We should understand that our failure to intervene now—early, effectively, and in a targeted way—carries a price that is far too high to pay.

Dr. Shonkoff cited three areas of intervention for preventing youth violence. First is the need for comprehensive preventive health services for children that are fully implemented and fully funded. He told the luncheon participants that this involves "not just attention to medical care, but also the provision of support for families who are rearing young children, in

order to provide anticipatory guidance so that, from the very beginning, parents can understand their children's basic needs and can actively promote healthy development." This provides an opportunity to detect and address early signs of difficulty before, rather than after, the fact.

The second area Dr. Shonkoff highlighted was the importance of children's daily care. He noted, "We live in a society where more than half of our young children are cared for by people other than their parents during a large part of their waking hours, and we face a major challenge in terms of how we think about and assure the quality of that care . . . particularly in this [current] environment where the demands for non-parental child care far outstrip the resources that we're willing to mobilize. If we want to address the roots of violence, we have to think about the kinds of environments that children grow up in from infancy. If our aim is to provide inexpensive child care slots for as many children as possible, as if it really doesn't matter what happens to them when they're very young, as long as there's somebody around to make sure they don't run out into the street, we will pay a high price later. If we truly understand human development, and think about the importance of early experiences, we will realize that early child care is a key focal point for prevention and intervention to influence the early determinants of anti-social behavior." The third area suggested by Dr. Shonkoff that could serve as an opportunity for prevention and intervention is quality public education.

According to Dr. Shonkoff, "These three basics—health care, child care, and education—get to the very heart of preventing violence in our society," because it is during the early childhood years that individuals develop a foundation of personal characteristics they will carry throughout their lives, including basic issues related to trust and security. As he noted, "The experiences of early childhood affect the answers to the following key questions: 'Is the world a safe place? Can I rely on the fact that anyone will take care of me when I'm hungry or when I cry? Will somebody be there predictably? Do I have any sense of being cared for and being valued?' The reality is . . . if your early experiences teach you that the world is not a safe place, that you can't count on people to take care of you, that you do not matter as a person to anyone . . . it's a very fragile foundation for moving through childhood and into adulthood, and it provides little reason for you to care or worry about the safety and feelings of others." Dr. Shonkoff noted that children who have suffered abuse or neglect face a greater risk of being future victims or perpetrators of violence themselves.

Dr. Shonkoff described the current fragmentary service system for children and families. "We have one group of people talking about violence prevention, [and another] group talking about the promotion of school readiness . . . [and another] talking about promoting good health and screening for vision and hearing problems . . . [and another] talking about promoting healthy neighborhoods and social development." But as he noted, "There is not a separate knowledge base for violence prevention, school readiness, health promotion, educational achievement, or independence and self-sufficiency. It's all guided by one underlying science of human development."

Taking a long-term perspective, Dr. Shonkoff warned that society must address the underlying environmental risk factors that contribute to the problem of violence. As he

explained, "These factors are well known, well documented, and debated ad nauseam, but we still don't seem to know what to do about them . . . Poverty and racism and discrimination are major contributors to the culture of violence that threatens children in our country." He went on to describe how some recent political decisions are "creating a breeding ground for more anger, more rage, a greater sense of despair, increased disenfranchisement, and a more likely escalation of violence."

For example, Dr. Shonkoff noted that the American market-driven health care system has left approximately 10 million children without health care. "We haven't figured out how to provide basic health services for the uninsured, and this does not involve a random distribution of children. These tend to be . . . children whose families are under considerable stress, many of whom are working poor who are trying to manage a variety of very difficult responsibilities. These are children who are not getting the benefits of a basic, comprehensive, preventive health care experience, [including] timely interventions that would make it less likely that many of them would end up being engaged in or victims of violence.

"Welfare reform that forces women with young children to find jobs, along with cutbacks in food stamps and restrictions on benefits to immigrants . . . [will result in] increasing numbers of children who will find themselves in circumstances of increased family stress." For many, this can set the stage for increased violence as they grow up.

"Even though we don't have all the data we need to answer the question of which intervention works best," Dr. Shonkoff explained, "we know enough about the causes and the evolution of violence to understand that the unavailability of basic preventive services and the implementation of policies that expose children to greater levels of stress are working against otherwise well-intentioned [violence prevention efforts].

"For those of you who are waiting for researchers to come up with 'The Answer,' the wait will extend forever. Human development is very complex. It's determined by multiple factors, and there will never be a single, simple recipe for the solution to family [and societal] violence . . . It's also important to remember that humans are adaptive, and that the reason why some are violent is because it's a reasonable adaptation to the circumstances they've grown up in. If the world is a dangerous place, shooting first and asking questions later makes sense. So, some of the violence we deal with is a rational response to irrational life circumstances, and we're not going to solve that fundamental problem by coming up with a neat little intervention program.

"The foundations of human development are laid down very early in life. When we talk about prevention, 4 and 5 years of age is already old. When people talk about violence prevention during middle childhood and the preteen years, that seems like an oxymoron to me . . . it's awfully late.

"Most children's needs are met adequately by their families, informal supports, and basic services. The answer is not expensive, elaborate service systems. The answer is getting back to basics. Prevention requires realistic expectations and there are no panaceas.

The recent experience of decreasing crime rates is wonderful, and we should figure out how to keep them dropping. But crime rates will never be zero, and prevention should not be viewed as successful only when there's no violence anymore. We shouldn't set programs up for failure. Successful interventions make things better, but they don't eliminate the problem entirely. It's a matter of changing the probabilities. 'What works?' is the wrong question. The right questions are, 'What works for whom, and under what kinds of circumstances?' If we want to know what works, we have to ask the right questions. There's no single answer.

"I suggest that we focus our attention as much on failures as on successes," Dr. Shonkoff concluded. "In the health and human services arena, we have grown up in a culture that tries to bury research findings when they conclude that something doesn't work. Much of this is because funding of programs often depends on showing that they work, and so people don't want to report that something isn't succeeding. This represents a critical missed opportunity for pushing the knowledge base further. We should think of program evaluation in the spirit of continuous quality improvement, not as a vehicle for deciding whether programs should survive."

Following Dr. Shonkoff's remarks, Judge Harris noted that he generally sees young people in custody disputes and delinquency cases, as well as when children are classified as CHINS [Child In Need of Services]. He noted that when young people are out of school, "We're going to see them not just as a CHINS, but the likelihood is that we will see them on the delinquency list as well."

Judge Harris talked about the "after-school and before-parents hours," between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., as being a time of risk to young people, but also an opportunity for people to make an impact on violence and other issues that concern youth.

Speaking about the recent decline in violence in Boston, he noted the importance of collaborative efforts between government and community agencies. He cautioned against being overly optimistic, however. "I believe . . . that our kids have been exposed to violence too long to think that we solved the problem. Our kids on a daily basis see violence. Some of it is just on television—not just on movies, but on the news. I see young people in our court who are afraid to go . . . outside of their home, so therefore they don't go to school and they end up in front of a judge for truancy. But the fact is, they have mental health issues. I never knew before how many young people suffer from some [type] of mental health [problem]. You don't see it as a District Attorney and you don't see it as a public defender because you don't see the health records of all the kids all the time. We have a lot of kids who have to be addressed early, because they're the same ones we see coming back because no one addressed those issues [before it was too late].

"It is easy for us to recognize and identify kids who are at-risk," Judge Harris continued. "Having been a public defender, having been one of those kids who would have been called 'at-risk' growing up, I have a problem with it. I know the necessity for identifying, [but] . . . I went to a school where they had a special classroom for certain kids . . . Those were the kids who couldn't make it in a regular classroom, for whatever reasons . . . and that tag stayed with them their whole lives. My concern is as we identify kids at-risk, that we don't label them.

“I believe that if we invest in our kids, that we will reduce violence . . . I know from the [perspective of the] court that if we do not take the comprehensive approach that Dr. Shonkoff talked about . . . then we will not accomplish anything. I can rant and rave about a child not going to school, but if I don’t address the reason that child is not going to school, I have done nothing. I can threaten that child. I can even lock him up if I hold him in contempt, but that doesn’t address the issue of delinquency . . . because they come out and go right back to the same situation. You can not deal with just a child . . . [you must] deal with the whole family.”

Judge Harris also discussed the importance of a continuum of care outside the court system for at-risk youth and their families. “When we get a care and protection case and we help a family get past drug abuse or physical abuse of the child, when we dismiss that case because the parent has done everything they’re supposed to and there’s no more so-called ‘protective issue,’ that kid should not disappear. Now for us it has to. We’re restricted time-wise and resource-wise, but that means that that case should move from us to a different agency. It should move into an agency that for the next ten years offers support and help to that family so that they don’t come back to us. We don’t have aftercare for any of our programs the way we should. A child completes his time in DYS and gets out. He’s monitored, but if he’s doing okay, he’s forgotten about. So we end up dropping him. But he’s in the same neighborhood that had the same pressures and issues before he went to whatever program.”

Judge Harris also pointed out the high cost of incarceration compared to the cost of prevention and early intervention. He noted that it costs approximately \$50,000 a year to keep someone at Bridgewater State Prison, and “some of them have been there for 15 to 20 years. If we had spent a portion of that money up-front to do treatment for the whole family, a large number of them would not be there.

“I go to the young fathers’ groups at Norfolk and we talk about the fact that they have a responsibility to their children because they’re not raising their children while they’re in prison. Most of them will come out and be poor role models and will not know how to raise their children. And we’re doing nothing to change that. Then we will get their kids who will follow in their footsteps. When I was with the Probation Department, one time I had the grandfather, father, and son on probation all at the same time . . . We are our parents’ children. We will relive their lives if nothing else changes. Most of us want our children to do better than we did. But if we don’t do anything to give them the opportunity to do better, then we can’t expect them to do any better.”

Following Judge Harris’ remarks, the discussion focused on how to identify youth who may be at risk for future violence. One participant noted research studies done in other countries found that young people seen in hospitals for injuries inflicted either by their parents or by other children are more likely to receive additional injuries later on, and eventually become involved with the criminal justice system.

Participants noted that efforts to identify at-risk youth by sharing information between schools, hospitals, and the community are hampered by confidentiality concerns. Attorney General Harshbarger reminded the group that some young people and their families have contact with numerous agencies, yet no one pulls together all the information and really helps the situation. At the same time, there are other families that fall through the cracks; no agency has paid attention to them. He agreed that the issue of sharing information for purposes of prevention and early intervention is complicated, and that the need to protect children must be balanced with the need to help them and their families.

As a partial solution to the problem presented by confidentiality laws, Judge Harris urged that adults in the community, who see at-risk youth every day, become more involved. "We have to figure out a way to make people in communities feel that these are nothing but kids. They need resources. They need your help. They need your support. When I was growing up, I wasn't a bad kid but if you did something wrong in your community, someone else stepped up in the community to correct you. We have to have more people who look outside their doors and see these kids out there who need help, mothers who need help, fathers who need employment, and who will step forward to offer that help."

Dr. Shonkoff concluded, "Polls taken during the last presidential campaign showed that a lot of people really are more interested in doing things that will help children than in balancing the budget. And many are even willing to have their taxes go up if they thought it would improve children's lives . . . We must acknowledge that many children are not being taken care of in this Commonwealth. They're not being protected, and basic issues related to child care and health are not being addressed adequately. It's beyond the capacity of many families to respond to these needs on their own. We must make a commitment, as a society, to a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of all our children, if we truly wish to prevent the poison of violence in our lives."

SESSION 5

THE VOICE OF YOUTH

MAY 1, 1997

SESSION 5—May 1, 1997

THE VOICE OF YOUTH

It is imperative that we include young people as our partners in our mission to reduce youth violence. Their input is crucial for shaping recommendations for what may be done to curb youth violence in Massachusetts. With that in mind, the fifth session of the Working Luncheons on Youth Violence Prevention featured the perspectives and insights of local youth. Four males (Chandan, Avery, Wilson, Josh) and eight females (Kenisha, Tosha, Susannah, Melissa, Michelle, Nishalee, Tangella, Frenia) participated. In a departure from the usual luncheon, the session was held after school to accommodate the young people's schedule.

The session opened with Chandan reading a letter written by his friend, 11-year-old Anthony, to Anthony's brother. Anthony was invited to meet General Powell at the Presidents' Summit on America's Future several days earlier, where he read this letter.

"An open letter to my brother. Thank you for quitting the gang. When you were 11 years old, the age that I am now, you looked up and saw our older brother selling drugs and running the gangs. First you looked up at them and then you followed them. Every time I said good-bye, I was scared that it would be forever. I watched Mom looking everywhere for you, and I knew that she wouldn't find you, because you were on the corner selling drugs.

Then one day you quit the gang and started hanging out with the Dorchester Youth Collaborative [DYC] guys. When you were home, you never answered the phone. When your fellows from the gang called, I used to lie for you. I told them that you were out with your girlfriend and you didn't even have a girlfriend. Thank you for quitting the gang. I don't even think of following the gang. I will follow you. Now I am going to Philadelphia to meet General Powell. Wherever I go, no matter how far I can see, I am always thinking that I am riding on top of your shoulders, big bro . . .

Kids . . . have a lot of chances to [do] bad things. It is easy to steal cars, sell drugs and join gangs. Meanwhile, big bro, we have [chances] to go to a safe haven youth center. There are a lot of kids just like us who don't have a safe haven to go to. General Powell, the young people at DYC in Boston want adults from everywhere to give kids a community, coach, to help them find the good things to do after school. Can I ask for one more thing? We want every kid in a dangerous neighborhood to have the chance to go to a safe haven youth center. Will you give them one chance?"

One of the young panelists said she could relate to Anthony's letter. "It's bad out there," she said. "The guns, the killing. We're killing each other, when we ought to just survive. It's like we're dying."

Kenisha, 19 years old, said, "I found the letter very touching because, for one, the little boy who wrote the letter happens to be my little cousin, and I know the trouble that my aunt has been going through to keep them together. And I really see the Dorchester Youth Collaborative as the reason that my cousin is still alive today. I've lost many cousins and friends because of gang violence . . . I feel that if we did have more youth community centers or maybe jobs, somewhere to send teenagers during the daytime, maybe we could keep more people alive."

Nearly all the young people at the session thought that gangs were a problem in their neighborhoods. As Kenisha stated, "I myself, I've never been in a gang. But living in the Roxbury and Dorchester area, I do know almost everything about a gang that you could possibly know. And when you have a little 4- or 5-year-old brother who [doesn't] feel safe going outside to ride a bicycle or play with his friends, there must be a problem."

Another girl agreed, saying how gangs had limited her activities when she was younger. "The problem that I have with gangs is that they take over the neighborhood a lot. Not as much as they used to. I've noticed that a lot more places are being built for youths to go to, but before . . . I was young and I wasn't able to go outside. My aunt babysat me. She lived in Orchard Park. And that was a big place for a lot of gangs, a lot of shoot-outs, and at 2:00 or 3:00, I had to come inside even though the sun was still out."

Another young girl on the panel described how problems between gangs can escalate quickly from minor disagreements to major arguments, and can turn deadly. Wilson, 18 years old, agreed, describing how comments are often the catalyst for disputes from which no one wants to back down. "It's all about rumor," he said, "because you could hear somebody say one thing and when it gets back to that person, the peer pressure around that is that you feel like you have to retaliate. You want to get back. You want to be the big man."

Attorney General Harshbarger asked the panelists why young people joined gangs, and what could be done to prevent them from doing so.

Avery responded, "I think a lot of people are in gangs for protection. They feel like the gang is going to protect them [from the violence on the streets]. A place to be around people they think care about them."

Kenisha replied, "I think one of the biggest . . . causes of violence and gangs is drugs . . . because they're fighting over territory . . . And any time money is involved it seems like there is a problem." She also noted that younger children look up to older teens who are in gangs as role models, and often younger kids are recruited into gangs by older members. Another young panelist suggested that prevention efforts should be attempted when kids are young; if children see that there are fun and interesting alternatives, they will be less likely to get involved in gangs. "Kids are not stupid," she said, "especially now in this time and age. They know what's good and what's bad. When they see someone that they can go do stuff with . . . have fun, go places, go on field trips out of Boston . . . kids want to do that instead."

Attorney General Harshbarger asked if peer mediation helped solve some of the problems arising from disputes. Tosha, who is involved in the Student Conflict Resolution

[SCORE] program at a local high school, replied, "I think that if they talk about it, then maybe they won't be as mad and will probably calm down," she said. "Some kids are really ignorant and they just want to fight no matter what . . . for whatever reason. And no matter how much you talk to them, they might just still want to fight." Avery felt mediation helped people get the story straight, rather than relying on rumors—the "he said/she said" syndrome.

Susannah, also involved in SCORE, replied, "A lot of people come in [to the mediation program] really mad, but when they actually hear the other person's point of view . . . they have a chance to say 'Sorry,' or 'I was upset when you did this.' And we ask questions like, 'How did you feel when so and so said this about you?' And a lot of fights happen because someone feels disrespected or they feel like someone's done wrong to them. When people come to mediation [they] actually learn tips on how to go up to the person. And we write up agreements, asking them 'If you hear anything about me, come and ask me rather than getting mad and coming at me in my face and pushing me'—instead of saying 'I know you [were] talking about me' and then starting a fight."

Kenisha explained how peer mediation makes it easier for people who don't want to fight. "I notice that most of the people in conflict don't want to fight. And I think that the SCORE program gives them both an opportunity not to. When you are in the hallway and you have friends around you and everyone's in everyone's face, you're under pressure to fight. But when you give these people a place to come to, you know they each can solve their own problems and neither one has to really back down and look like punks."

Attorney General Harshbarger asked the group how they would stop people from getting into fights if they don't come in for mediation. Taking a long-term preventive approach, Melissa felt that instilling young people with self-esteem and self-confidence would help. "[In] some schools . . . teachers give their kids confidence and they tell them that it's okay if somebody calls you a punk, you shouldn't worry about it . . . And I guess the best way is just talking to the kid . . . by having adults . . . who changed their lives . . . [who] used to be gang members, get them more into the community and schools and talking to the kids. Because I think that's really working."

Another girl talked about intervening during fights outside of school. "[It's] really, really, really hard to stop a fight. When people are . . . so mad and they see this person and they just see red and they want to fight . . . I would try my best physically [if girls were fighting]. If there's no one there that can stop the fight, I'll let them fight, but they can still be mediated. Because there's always a retaliation . . . [So maybe if] a police station had a mediation room or something like that, it would be a good idea or if it was city-wide and they already had a fight and . . . giving them tips like 'John-John and so and so had a fight and they're going to retaliate,' and you get them in there and you get them talking about it. Like, 'What happened and why did you guys fight?' 'How do you feel about this?'"

Attorney General Harshbarger asked the students how much of a factor weapons, particularly guns, were in fighting. Avery responded, "I think they use guns because they're not man . . . or woman enough to fight with their fists." Susannah thought that while some people did use their fists first, "When it's gone too far, that's when the guns come in . . .

They always just start with fighting, they just want to prove something. But that person can't fight and walk because they lost. So then they say 'I'm going to shoot them, because they're not going to go around thinking they're all that.'" Another girl agreed, but pointed out that many girls carry box cutters, glass, and screwdrivers, and will use them when jealous over another girl's appearance. "Girls will actually get so mad at someone—'Oh she has long hair and I don't like it,' take it and cut her hair. Or 'Her face is so pretty,' and take [the glass] and cut her face."

Attorney General Harshbarger asked the young people why they thought there was so much youth violence. Melissa agreed that violence seen on movies and television could be a factor, giving young people ideas about committing crimes. Another girl talked about the cumulative effects on young children of violence on television and in music. "When a 10-year-old or a 7-year-old watches [the television show] *Homicide* and they see shows like this, then they see the people that are in their environment and see that's the way you get ahead, that's the way you get your money, that's the way they learn. That's the way children think."

One of the adults at the session asked the young panelists whether the prospect of jail was a deterrent to young people selling drugs or carrying guns. Reactions were mixed. While one girl thought it was a deterrent, another disagreed, saying that if someone innocent was jailed that could make things worse, since they—or their friends or family—would retaliate. Josh reported that many kids know they could end up in jail but don't care. A popular phrase he hears kids say is "It ain't a crime if you don't get caught." Another student thought that people selling drugs in order to pay the rent could be better served by being offered regular jobs, rather than being sent to jail.

Wilson replied that some people who carry guns do so for self-protection and think that the police are not doing a good enough job. He also said, "I don't think sending them to jail will make a difference . . . What the kids are looking for is a role model, someone to look up to. So I think if an adult went to the kids, tell them how they feel about everything, sit down, talk with them, let them know where they're coming from, tell them . . . 'I want to help you make a difference in your life' . . . So if somebody that used to be in a gang came back to the neighborhood [and talked] to everyone, like 'Yo, I used to be in a gang too myself. And now I want to give something back to the community.'" "

Chandan thought that young people got into trouble because they don't get the attention they need at home. "The parents need to talk to them, sit down and have a discussion with them . . . see where they're at, instead of just 'Oh, well, you going outside? Go ahead. Where you going to be at? Oh. Forget it.'"

Another girl on the panel replied, "[If] they get caught with the gun and they have done something, if they're at a young age, instead of putting them in jail teach them, give them classes, give them places to go, places where they'll be cared about and have role models . . . to look up to, instead of just putting [them] in jail, sit there and smolder and not be able to learn anything." Several of the young panelists were critical of the crime bill, and thought the money should be spent on prevention and education, rather than building more jails.

An adult at the session echoed everyone's sentiments that young people like the panelists can play a crucial role in helping themselves and future generations. "[My] hope would be that the young people here . . . have some adult older than them in their lives who believes in them and who they can count on, whether it's a parent or [someone] else," he said. And that there is a younger youth, who is depending upon them, looking up to them . . . [I]t is clear to me that this group of young people can have more impact on those a few years younger than them than we can, and that these young people should never lack a role in our society . . . And it's just crazy that young people that age don't have jobs or don't feel like they have a role in our community, because they have a very special place."

At the conclusion of the program, Attorney General Harshbarger asked each of the young people for their final recommendations. Their suggestions included: more mediation programs, including between gangs; more local programs for youth that offer fun, productive, and positive alternatives to gangs; more job opportunities for young people; more programs that teach young people right from wrong; more programs that take young people on trips outside of Boston and to visit colleges; and laws that make it harder for teens to obtain guns.

In closing, Melissa offered these words of advice to the adults in the audience: "I think what all of you are doing is . . . the best thing for us. We need you all to support us, so we can talk to our peers . . . We're the next generation . . . so it takes us to change things."

CONCLUSION

The series of Working Luncheons on Youth Violence Prevention brought together representatives of government agencies; law enforcement; communities; foundations; businesses; schools; colleges and universities; religious groups; health care; public health; the media; and young people. The sessions provided a forum in which to discuss the problem of violence, to explore and deliberate about new approaches to prevention and intervention, and to help break down some of the barriers to communication among different disciplines. It also focused attention on the importance of intervening early—during the prenatal period, infancy, and early childhood—to truly have a long-term impact on violence prevention.

The same interdisciplinary and collaborative spirit seen during the Working Luncheons is reflected in many of the approaches to violence prevention that led to the dramatic decline in youth violence observed in Massachusetts over the course of the series. While everyone—including young people themselves—should be proud of their contributions to this decrease, we cannot afford to be complacent. Weapons abound, and many young people still live in fear of violence every day—at home or in their communities. If we do not act now, and pay attention to the needs of young people and their families before they become problematic, we will pay for it in the future. We have no time to lose.

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